

What if Somerville's Healey School
and Mystic neighborhoods were reimagined
as a single riverfront community?

HEALEY + MYSTIC





HEALEY MYSTIC MASTER PLAN

by
Friends of Healey
in partnership
with the
Mystic Learning Center
and with
support from the
City of Somerville
through the
Community Preservation Act

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CHAPTER 1 **INTRODUCTION**

Vision

In Spring 2015, the Friends of the Healey, a non-profit parents group, supporting the Arthur D. Healey Elementary School, together with the City of Somerville, were awarded a grant through the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act. The grant funded the research, planning and design of



Cherries trees in bloom at the Arthur D. Healey School

this multi-phased Master Plan to improve the open and recreation space within the study area.

Study Area

The study area includes the open space that connects the Arthur D.

Healey School to the Blessing of the Bay Boathouse located on the Mystic River. Kindergarten through eighth grade students attend this Somerville public school. The Boathouse is a public facility owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation and managed by the Somerville Recreation Department. The Mystic View and Mystic River apartments, owned by the Somerville Housing Authority, are identified as the Mystic Neighborhood and link the Boathouse to the Healey School. The Mystic Activity Center is a program and social hub for Mystic Neighborhood residents.

Goals of the Master Plan

- Improve accessibility and visibility of pedestrian route between the Healey School and the Boathouse.
- Make better use of Healey Schoolyard.
- Create a new Healey+Mystic Neighborhood identity.

Study Area



Current Site

Within the study area there are a variety of open space features and connections to larger networks.

The Healey Schoolyard is mostly paved for a variety of ballcourts. The schoolyard also has a school garden and tot-lot playground.

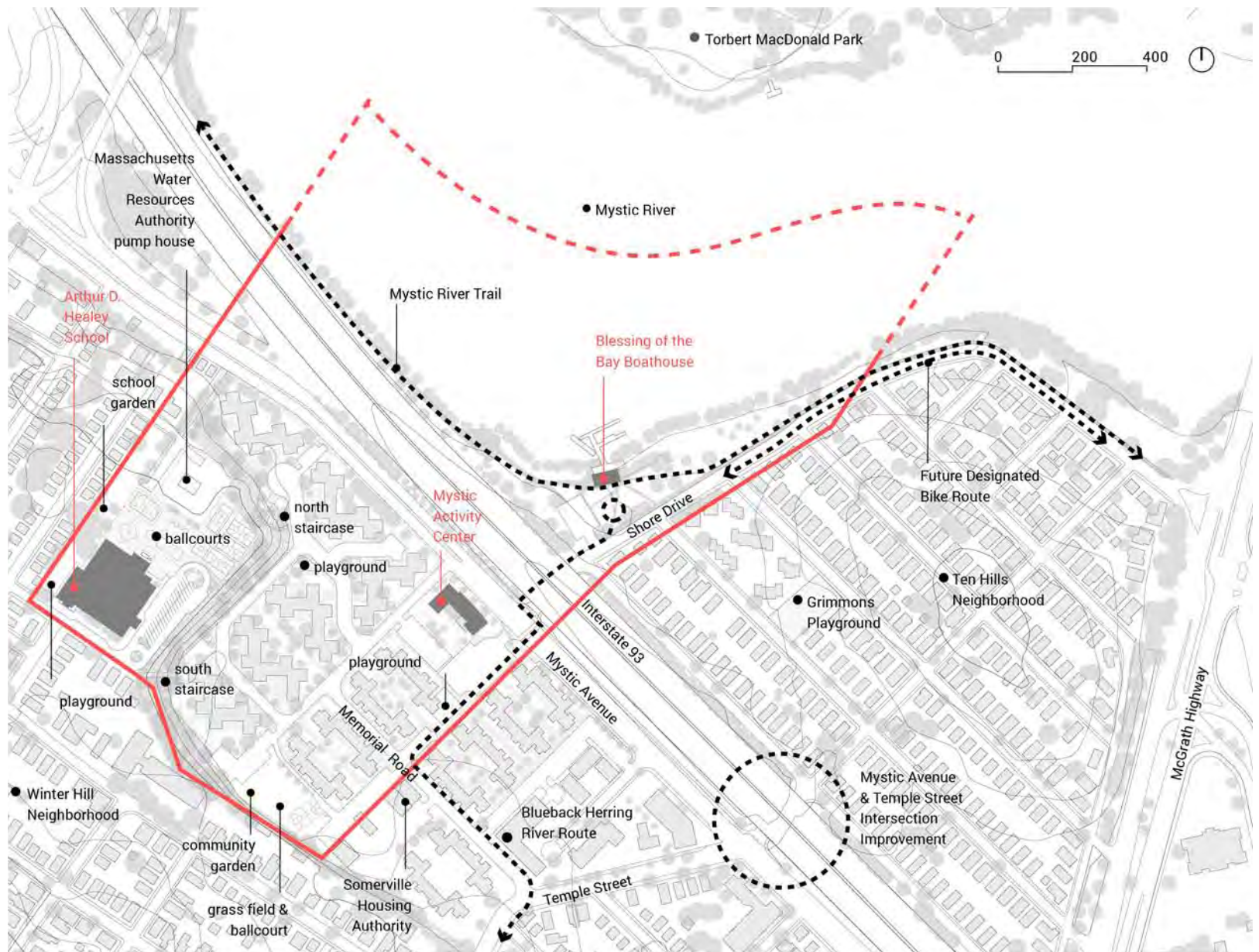
Near the Healey School, there is an active pump house owned and operated by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority.

The Boathouse facilitates boating programs spring through winter. This area connects the Mystic River Trail to the Blueback Herring River Route. The River Route travels under I-93 and over Mystic Avenue, through the Mystic Neighborhood to the Department of Conservation's Foss Park.

The Mystic Neighborhood has three playgrounds, a grass field, a ballcourt and a community garden.

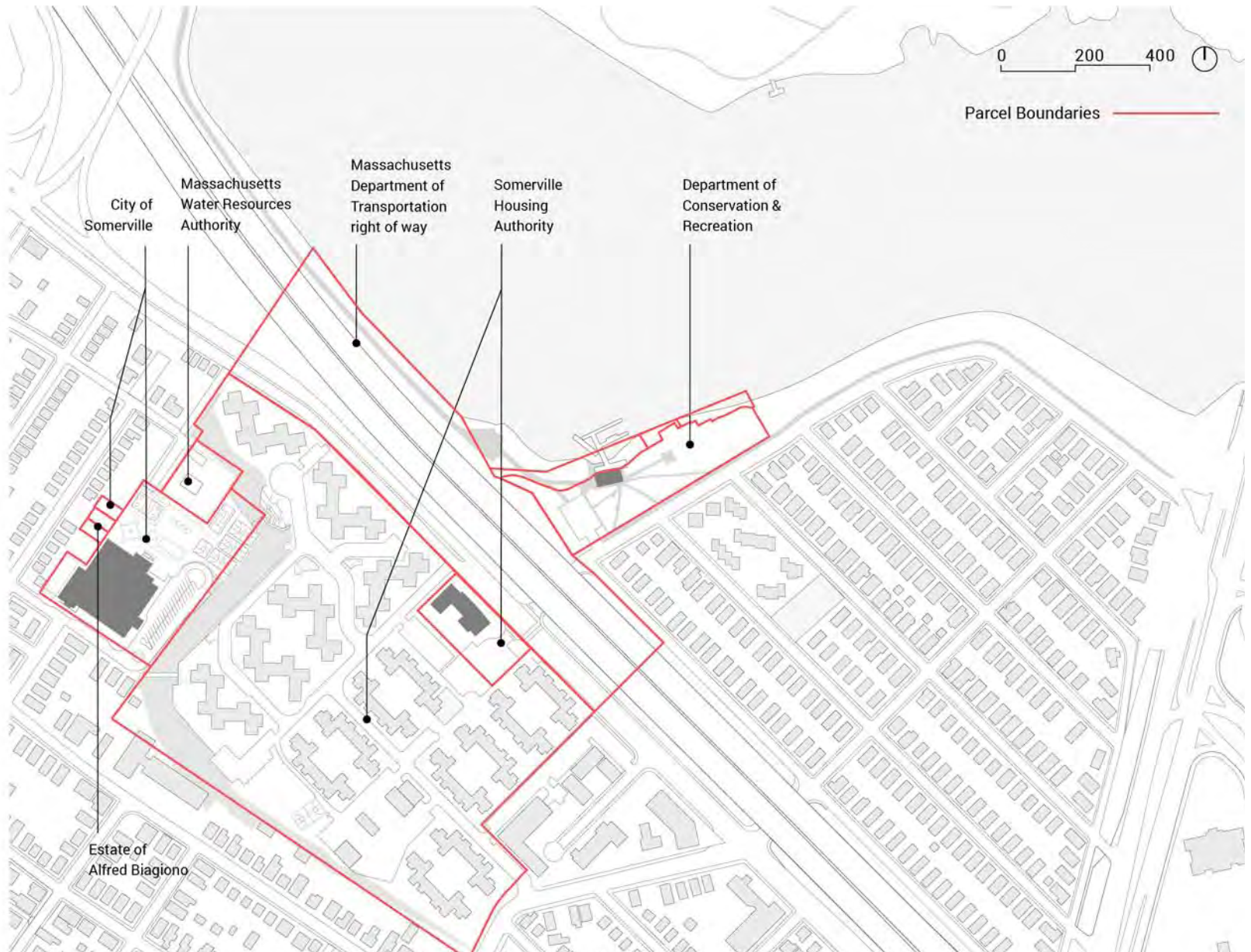
Separating the Mystic Neighborhood from the Healey Schoolyard is the Bluff. There are two staircases that provide pedestrian access between the top and the bottom of 35' of grade change.

The neighborhood on top of the Bluff, north and east of the Healey School is known as Winter Hill. Ten Hills is the neighborhood near the Boathouse, across I-93 and Mystic Avenue from the Mystic Neighborhood. The Healey School is the proximity public school for all three of these neighborhoods.



Ownership

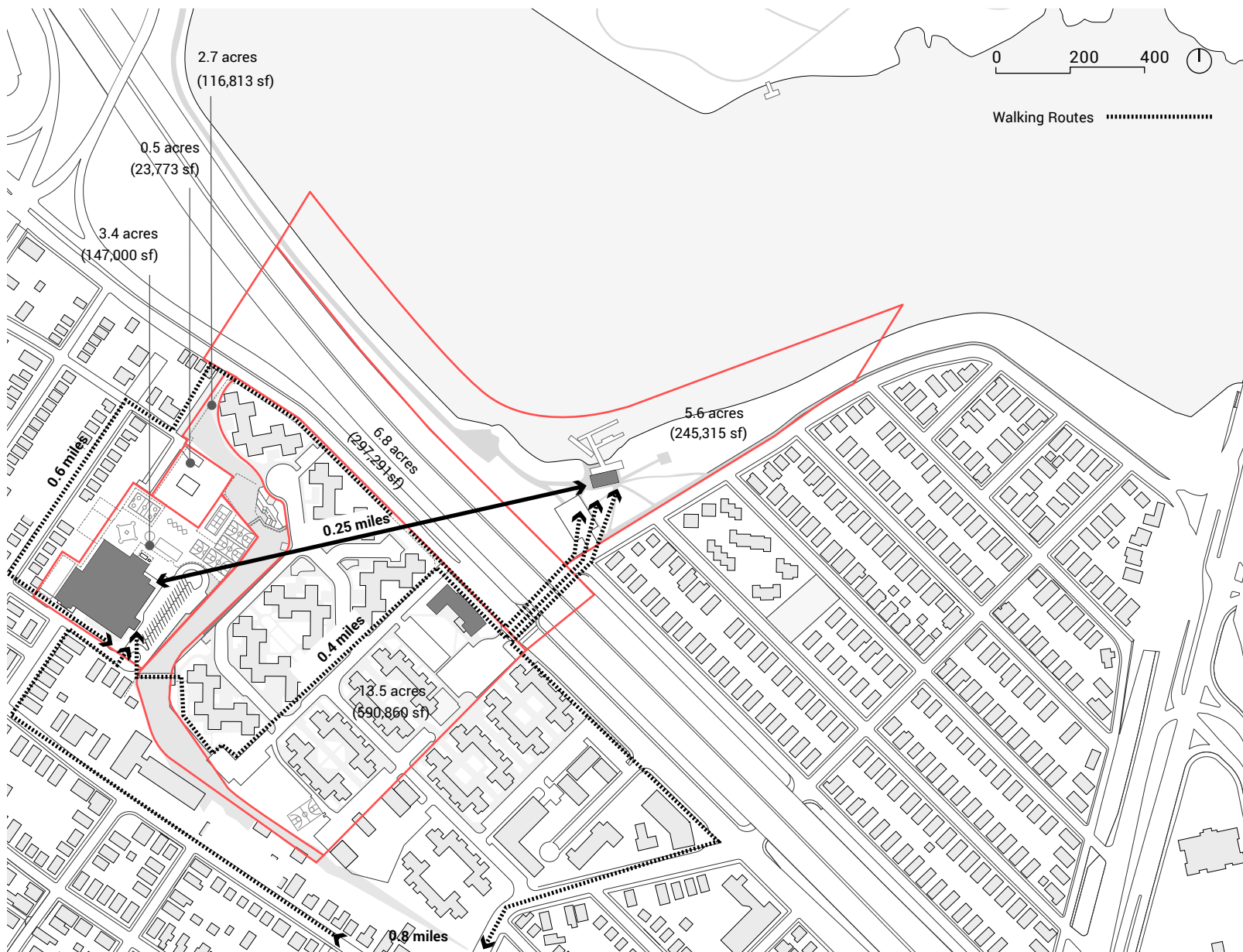
The study area is owned by six different entities. The City of Somerville owns the Healey School and surrounding schoolyard. The Somerville Housing Authority owns the Bluff and the extents of the Mystic Neighborhood. Mystic Avenue and I-93 right of way is under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Division of Transportation. The Blessing of the Bay Boathouse is managed by the Somerville Recreation Department. The Boathouse and riverfront land is owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. The two vacant parcels adjacent to the Healey School garden are owned by Estate of Alfred Biagiono. Land owned by the Massachusetts Water Resources Association is an active pump station with strict limitations on access and use due to operational and security needs.



Size

The total size of the study area is about 32 acres. Nearly 3 acres identified as the Bluff, are undeveloped and inaccessible due to the steep slope and fences at the top and bottom.

A straight connection between the School and the Boathouse is about a quarter of a mile. Physical and safety barriers including I-93, Mystic Avenue and the 35' high Bluff impede a pedestrian friendly and accessible route. The most direct pedestrian route to the Healey School, through the Mystic Neighborhood is less than half a mile, but involves a 70 plus stair climb. The only accessible pedestrian route requires a walk along Mystic Avenue or a nearly mile walk around the Bluff, through the Winter Hill Neighborhood.



Site History

Somerville is famous for rounding and building atop the peaks of its seven hills. Especially along the Mystic River, the city can still be read as a struggle between the pressures

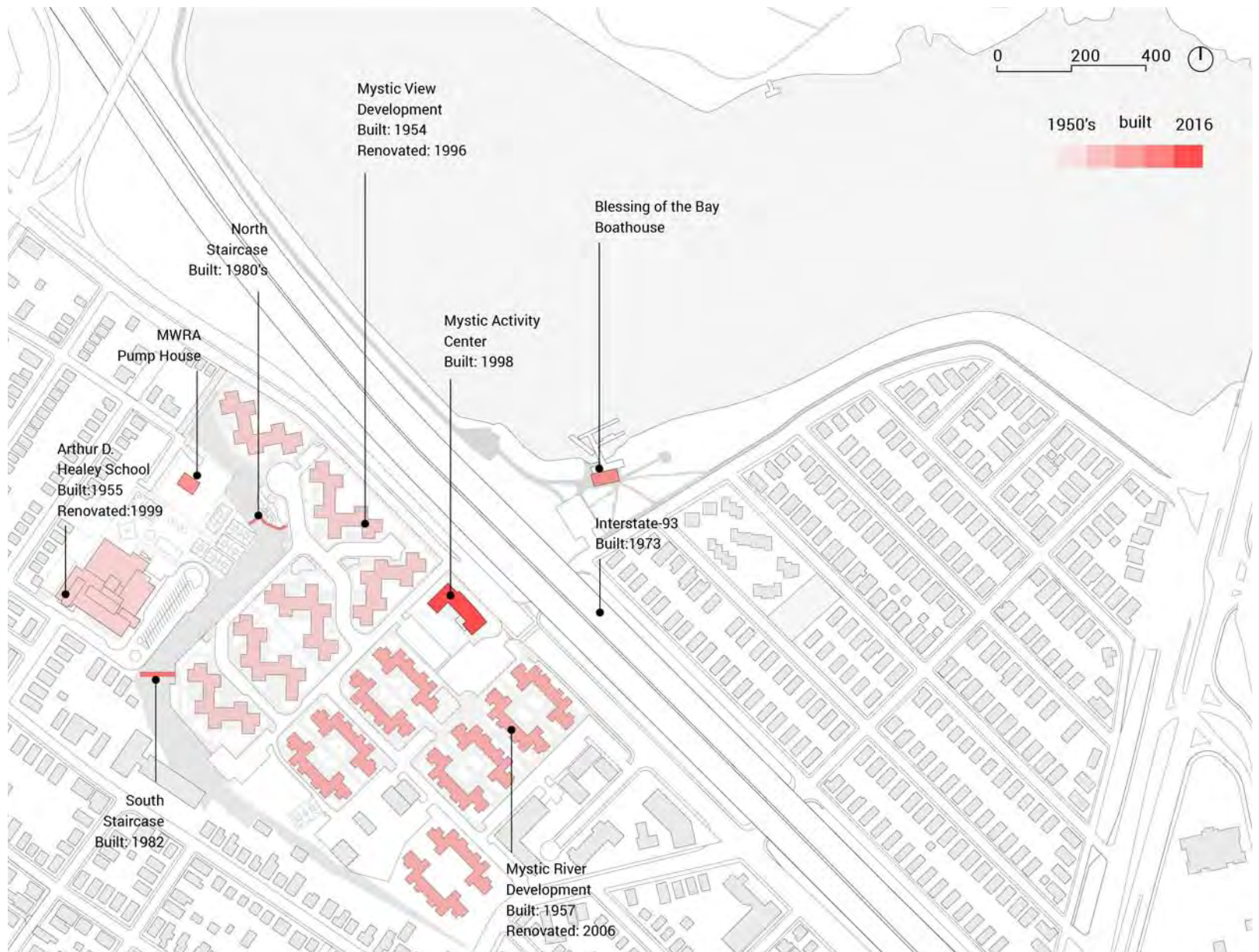
of urban development and the original pre-settlement hydrology, geology and topography. The 1893 map shows the contours of what was once a gradual transition between

the tidal estuarine river's floodplain and the hilly forested uplands to the south. As buildings, roads, and highways were constructed, the hillside was formed into a steep Bluff. This Bluff divides the School and Winter Hill Neighborhood from the Mystic Neighborhood and river below is the defining physical feature of the study area.



Building History

The Somerville Housing Authority built two housing developments, Mystic View and Mystic River apartments in the mid 1950s. The Arthur D. Healey School was built atop the Bluff around the same time as the Mystic apartments. The early 1970s brought the construction of I-93, physically separating the Mystic River from the Mystic Neighborhood. The two staircases were installed in the early 1980s, providing safe Bluff access for pedestrians traveling between the Healey School and the Mystic Neighborhood.



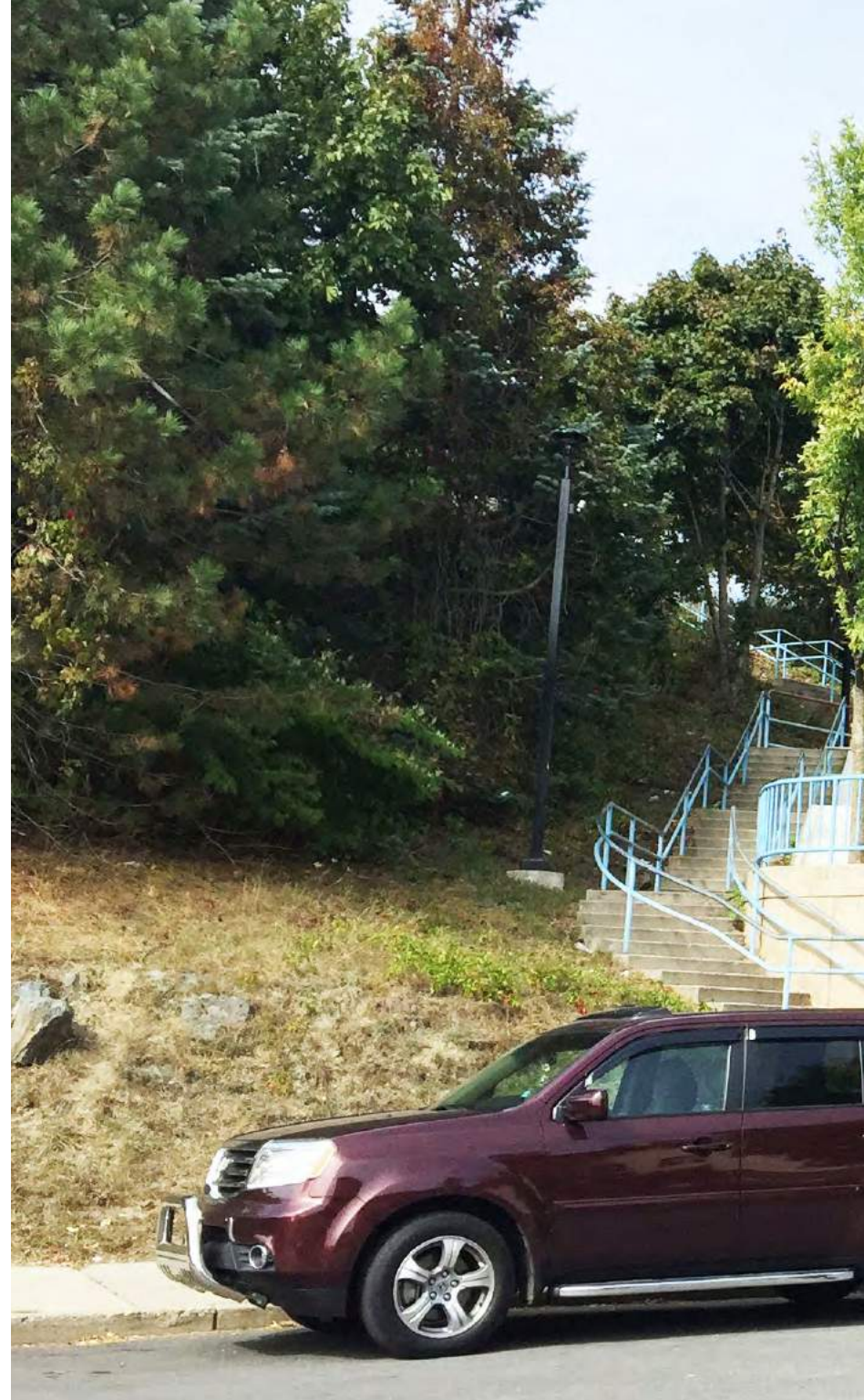
A Topographic and Social Barrier

Today, the Bluff slope is as steep as 2-to-1 and is about 35 feet high, effectively creating an urban-scale barrier. Forty years ago, following excavation and dumping for a Metropolitan District Commission (now Massachusetts Water Resource Authority) pump facility, the situation was far worse – a gravelly cliff, free of vegetation, and with no stepped connection. Many children were seriously injured traversing the ridge. Clair Beach and Susan Richard's 1986 documentary film, "The Staircase" tells the story of the neighborhood activism that led to the eventual construction

of steps. It is a case study in community organizing and the power of media (amateur video and cable access television) to achieve action.



Stills from excerpted from from "A Mountain of Trouble," 1979, from "The Staircase"



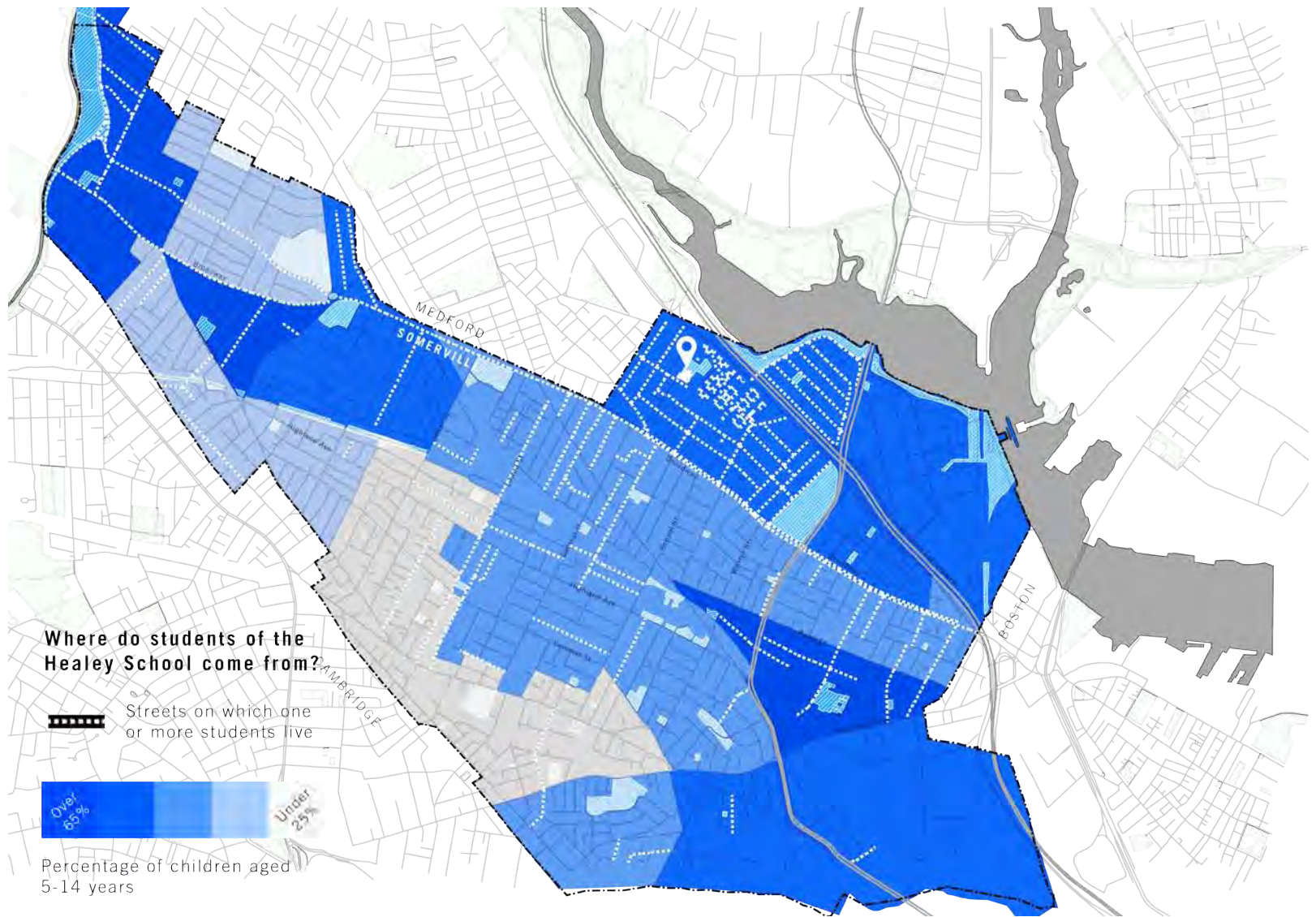


CHAPTER 2 **ANALYSIS**

Urban Context

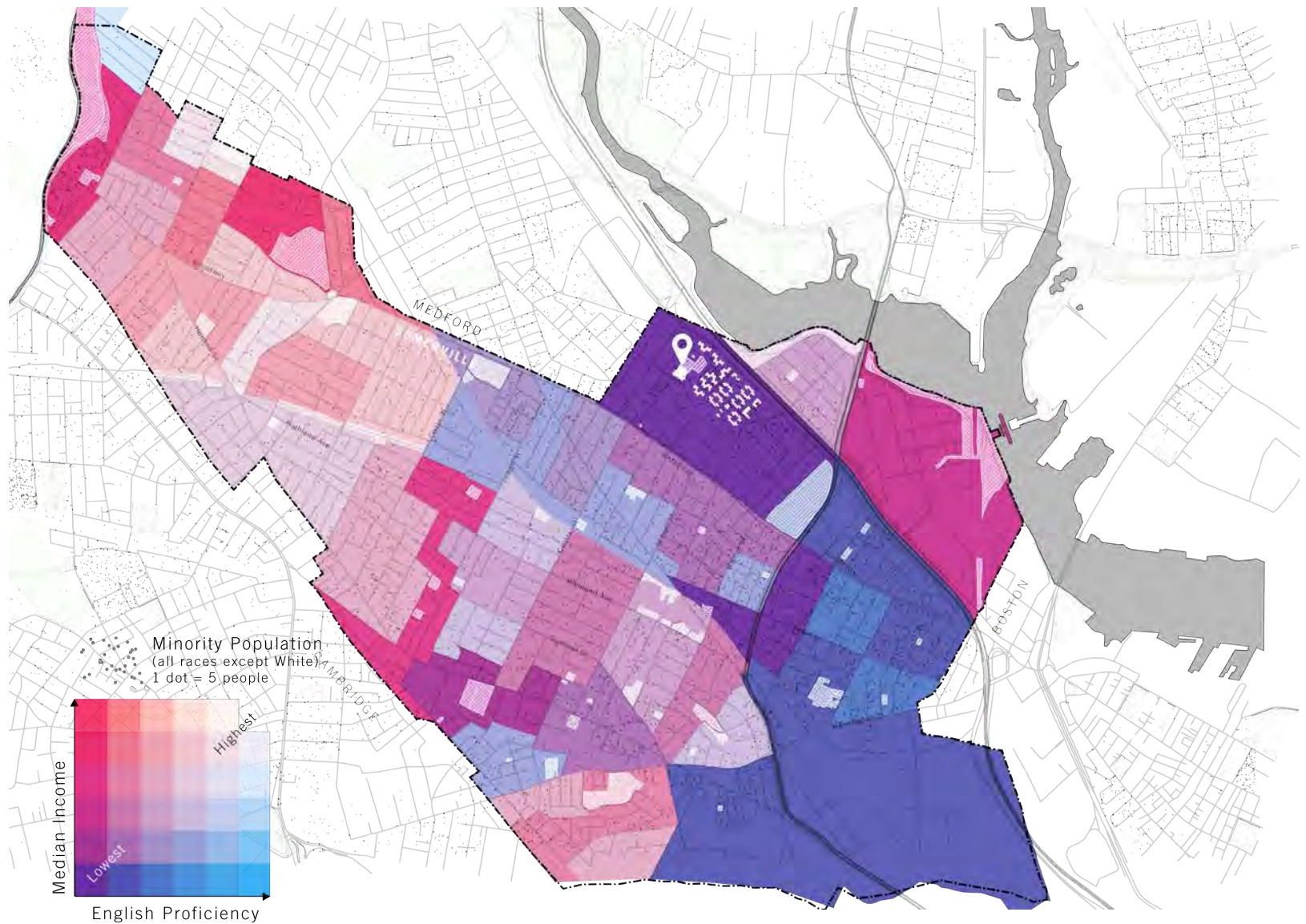
A significant portion of school age children in the City of Somerville live in Winter Hill and Ten Hills, as compared with other areas of the City. It is important to understand where students at the Healey School are coming from in the City. The relevance to planning for the Healey School and for open space connections are twofold. 1) Are the students local to the neighborhood, in which case, how are they getting to school? We want to make sure that our plan encourages

Safe Routes to School and prioritizes pedestrian safety, and easy and enjoyable connections for students. 2) Is the Healey School the primary recreational outlet and open space resource for its students? Understanding the socioeconomic profile and relative location of where students live, gives us an idea of how open space at the school can be programmed to serve its students and the larger community.



Demographics

The population in the study area is characterized by a combination of relatively lower incomes and less proficiency in English language than other Somerville neighborhoods.

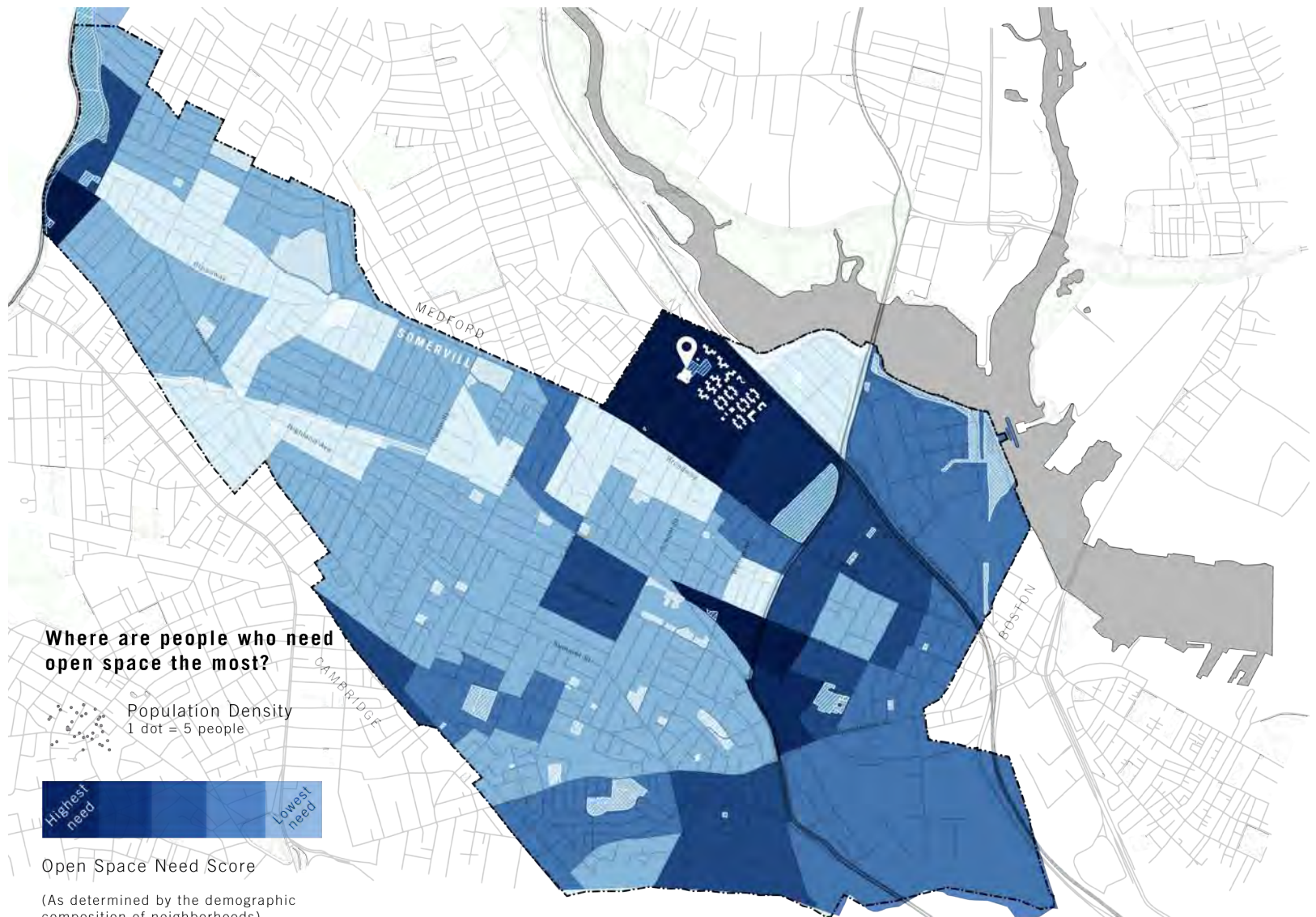


Open Space Need

Open space needs affect all communities. Ensuring the right type of open space that is accessible to where people live is in an important part of residents' quality of life. The City of Boston's needs analysis for open space takes into account special consideration for those populations that are often less advantaged, understanding that socioeconomic factors, such as minority population, children under 18, English proficiency and household income all play into residents' needs and the ability to access quality open space. Standard environmental justice criteria often line up with where open space is (or is not) accessible and multi-functional. The

following factors align to show that the neighborhoods within the study area have a relatively high needs assessment for access to open space. A new park and additional open space connections between the Healey School and the Mystic River Reservation can create a dynamic open space network for students and community residents alike.

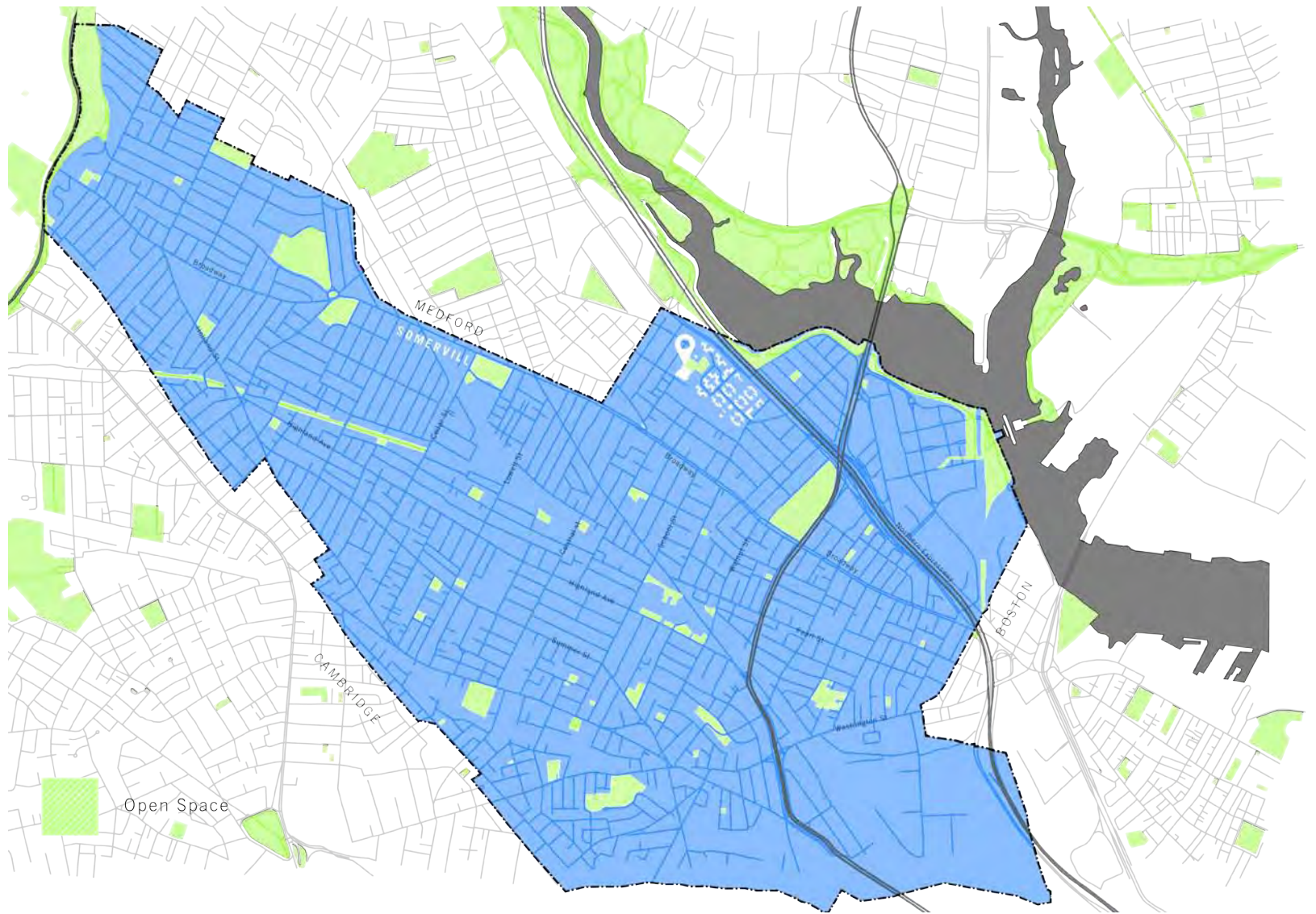
Somerville has a limited supply of land that can be potential open space. Larger recreational spaces are a particular need for the City.



City Open Space

In 2010, at the beginning of the SomerVision planning process, the City set out to add 125 acres of additional open space by 2030. Since then, the city has added almost 13 acres of open space with 19.5 acres in the pipeline. That still leaves a long way to go in a city with a limited land supply and a high residential density per acre. Which is to say that there are limited opportunities for new open spaces

in Somerville. Additional open space within the study area would serve citywide open space goals by the type of open space it provides (large recreational spaces, such as fields), as well as simply adding to the amount of new open space that the City wants to meet its goals. New open space within the study area would provide citywide and neighborhood level benefits.

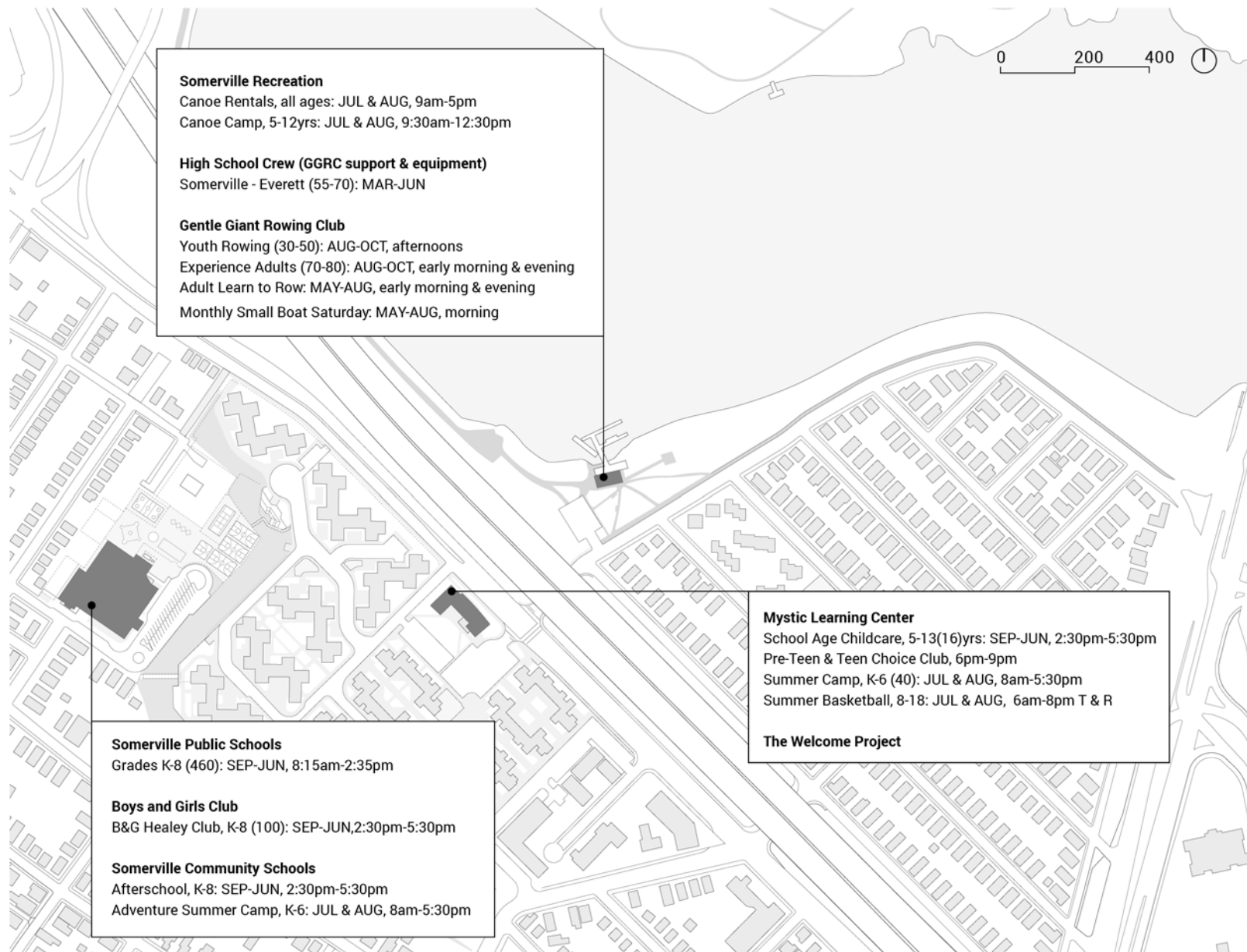


Study Area Open Space



Program Providers

There are many programs provided within the study area through the Healey School, the Mystic Activity Center and the Blessing of the Bay Boathouse.

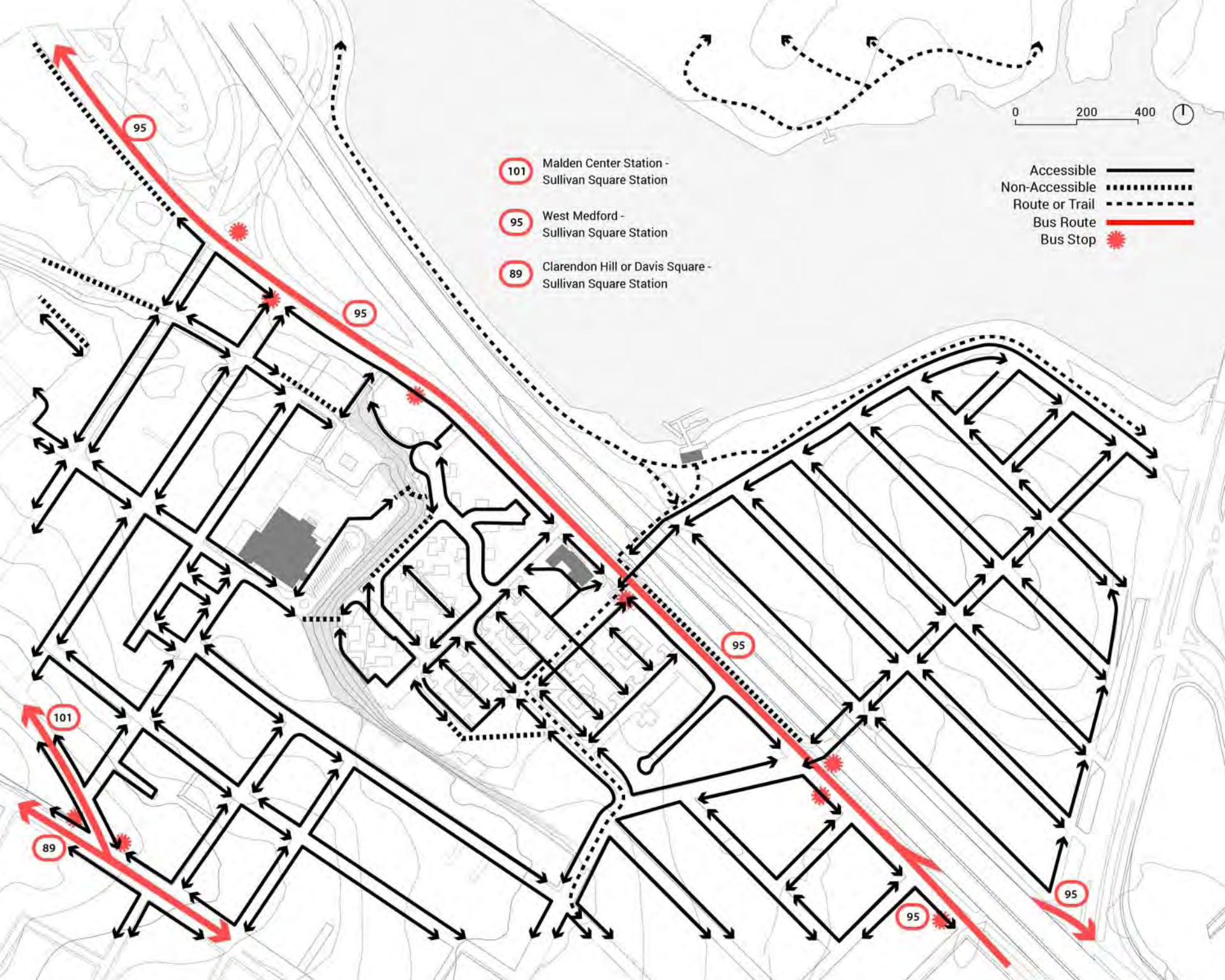


Pedestrian Circulation

There is only one accessible route that connects the Boathouse to the Healey School through the study area. This route travels along Mystic Avenue and up a pedestrian path that connects to Mt. Vernon Avenue. Currently, there is a wall and fence where Mt. Vernon Ave dead-ends at the Healey Schoolyard, with no entrance. Pedestrians must travel around Ash Avenue and then Meacham Street to reach the Healey School entrance.

The most direct pedestrian routes that connect through the Mystic Neighborhood to the Healey School require the use of one of the two staircases.

There are three bus lines with stops in proximity of the study area.



Vehicular Circulation

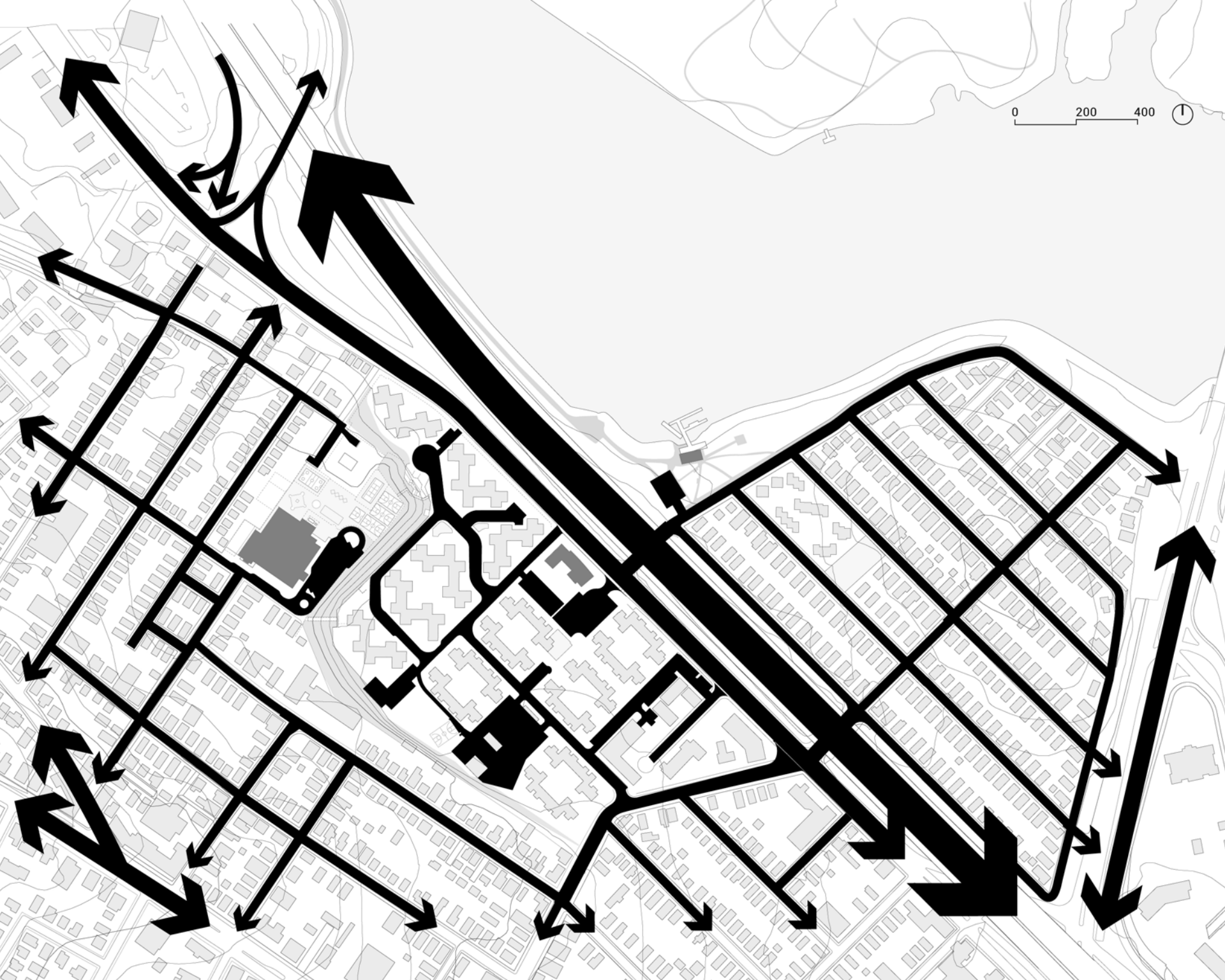
Vehicular circulation within the study area falls into three types of travel: commuters passing through, residents traveling to their homes and people driving to facilitate/participate in a program in the study area.

I-93 and Mystic Avenue carry heavy commuter traffic at peak times. While I-93 provides a physical barrier to the Mystic River, it also separates its traffic. With Mystic Avenue at the level of pedestrian travel, the multi-lane commuter route feels like a real danger to walk along and/or cross.

The grid of local roads around the Healey School in the Winter Hill Neighborhood is mostly for residential traffic

with the exception of Healey School traffic. With students traveling to the Healey School from all over Somerville, there is heavy traffic for drop-off and pick-up. The main pedestrian entrance, the school loading zone, and the staff parking lot entry converge in one place, at the dead-end of Meacham Street, causing many traffic conflicts at the start and finish of the school day.

Vehicular circulation within the Mystic Neighborhood is primarily for residents and maintenance vehicles. The roads can be confusing to visitors, often with dead-end parking lots.



Lighting

The distribution of lighting within the study area varies.

The Healey School has brightly lit hardcourts near the Bluff. However, there is less light near the building and no light at the South Stair. The contrast in lighting creates an environment that is hard for eyes to adjust.

The lighting within the Mystic Neighborhood is evenly lit and feels easy to navigate throughout. The Mystic Ave crossing and I-93 underpass are dimly lit, but even in light level allowing for eyes to adjust. The Boathouse has a variety of light fixtures, in different states of repair, providing an uneven level of lighting.

Basketball Courth in the
Healey schoolyard.

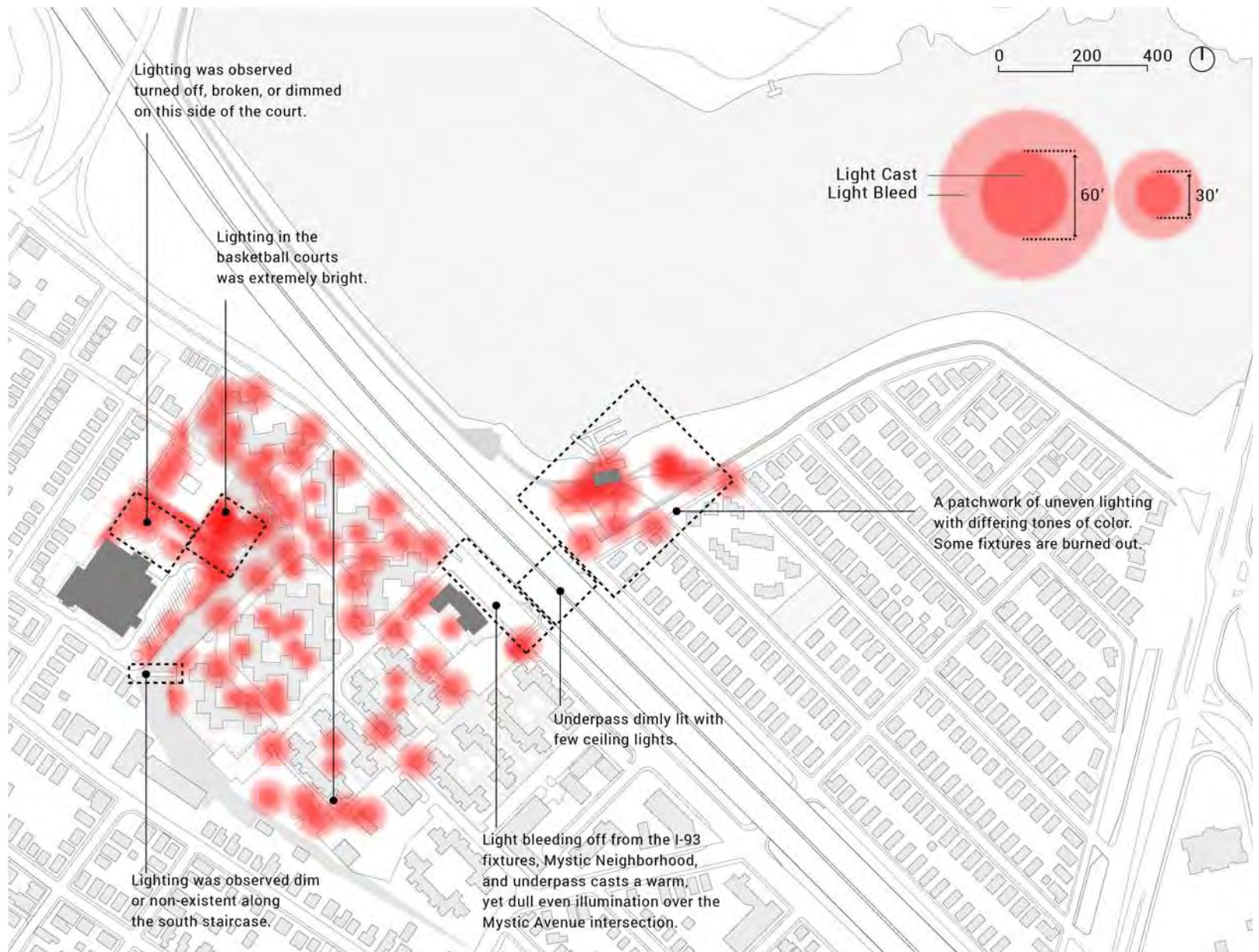


Connors Drvie in the
Mystic Neighborhood.



Foot path in the
Mystic Neighborhood.





Fences and Walls

Fencing and walls are used to designate boundaries for use and security. The sum of these boundary markers throughout the study feel more like barriers.



Steel picket fence along Mystic Avenue



Chain link fence and "H-beam" posts at the top of the south staircase where Meacham Street dead ends



Vine covered chain link atop Healey schoolyard



Views

The potential for views to the Mystic River and downtown Boston are there at the top of the Bluff. The existing tall chainlink fences along the perimeter, often covered with vines, limit views of the skyline.

The activity and scene on the Mystic River is missed by lack of views through overgrown vegetation. Selective pruning could open up views without damaging the riparian edge.

North edge of
Healey Parking Lot

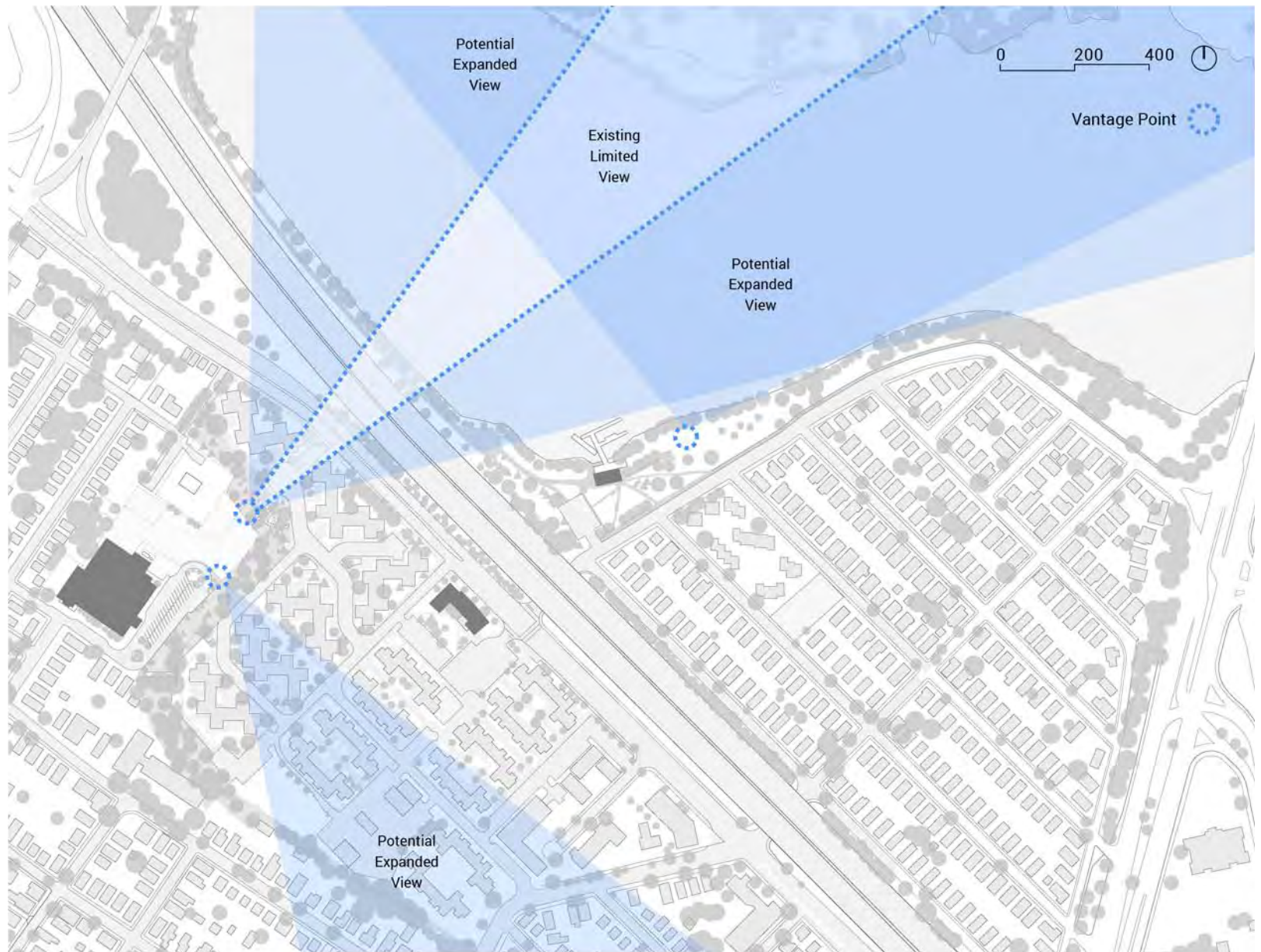


North edge of
Healey schoolyard.



The Mystic River edge





Stormwater

The majority of the study site is impermeable; surfaces are covered with pavement or buildings. Most stormwater is captured with surface drains and carried through the storm sewer to outflow to the Mystic River. Some stormwater is absorbed into permeable areas and supports the vegetation within the study area.

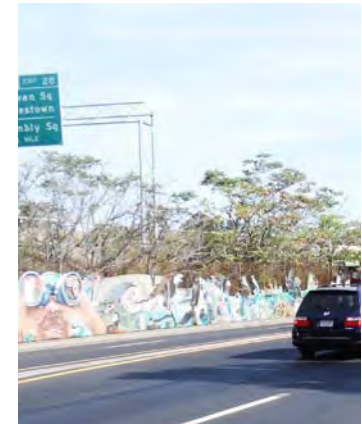


Vegetation

The predominant vegetation within the study area is lawn and trees in the Mystic Neighborhood and around the Boathouse. The Mystic River's edge and the Bluff have layers of shrubs and trees. Along I-93 and Mystic Ave, there are

volunteer shrubs and trees. There are two gardens, one in the Healey Schoolyard and a community garden in the Mystic Neighborhood.

LEFT: Healey School Garden
CENTER: Lawn and Trees in Mystic Neighborhood
RIGHT: Volunteer Shrubs and Trees along Mystic Avenue



LEFT: Trees and Shrubs on the Bluff
CENTER: Lawn and Trees in near the Boathouse
RIGHT: Shrubs and Trees at the Mystic River's Edge





Tree Canopy

Trees are a valuable resource, especially for urban environments. Trees clean the air by removing particulates and producing oxygen, cool the environment by removing CO₂ and adding shade, and intercept stormwater and use it as a resource before it enters the storm sewers and ultimately is disposed in the Mystic River.

The Mystic Neighborhood has a consistent planting of overstory trees that once they grow to maturity, will provide significant canopy. The Bluff, Mystic River's edge and areas adjacent to I-93 and Mystic Ave have good cover of trees, including some mature specimens. The Healey Schoolyard is nearly devoid of trees.



Ultrafine Particulates

The Community Assessment of Freeway Exposure and Health Study (CAFEH) conducted by Tufts University and Partners reveals how the study area is impacted with ultrafine particulates due to the vehicular traffic of I-93 and Mystic Ave. Wind patterns direct the movement of the particulates. The Boathouse and Ten Hills Neighborhood have higher concentrations than measured in the Mystic Neighborhood.



Field Size

The Healey Schoolyard is mostly paved and students use the fenced tennis and ball hockey courts for soccer and football. Soccer appears to be the most popular activity among both the Healey School and the Mystic Neighborhood communities. This study shows how different size fields scale in comparison to the existing schoolyard area.

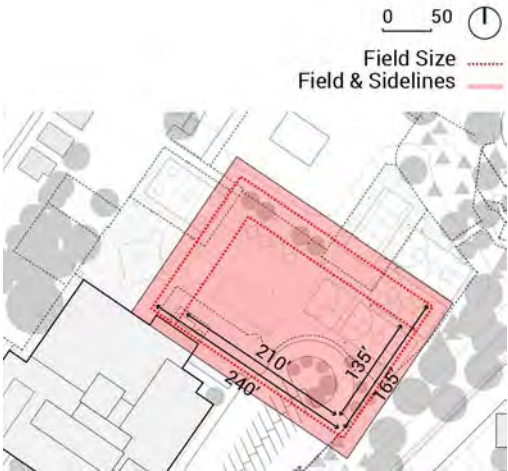
Comparative Overlays



Existing Athletic Courts



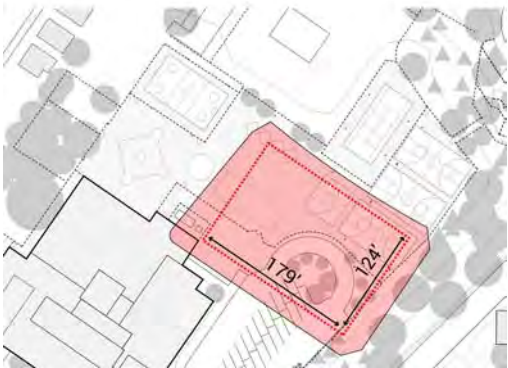
U-14 Soccer Regulation Size
15' Sideline Offset



U-12 Soccer Regulation Size
15' Sideline Offset



U-12 Soccer Regulation Size
15' Sideline Offset



Caouano School Field Size



East Somerville School Soccer Field Size



OPPOSITE: South staircaase
THIS PAGE: Bluff at Connors Drive

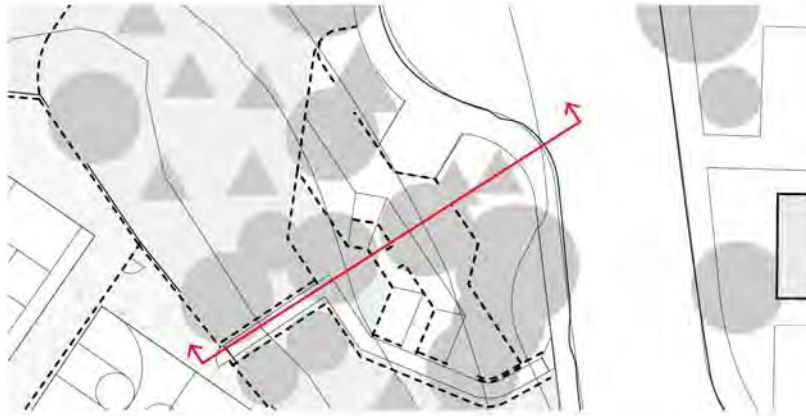


Bluff Access

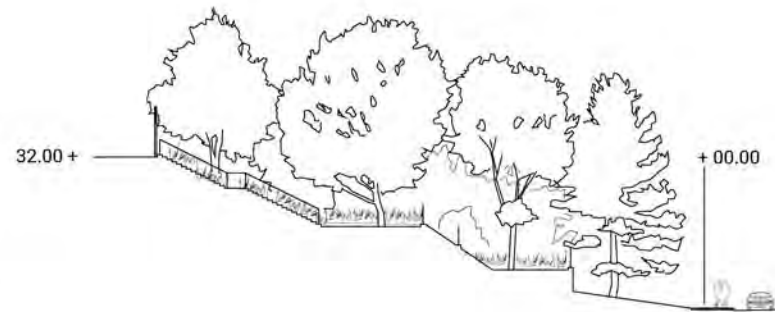
Currently, the only access to between the Mystic Neighborhood and the Healey School are two staircases. The south staircase is in need of repair due to crumbling concrete treads. The north staircase is in better condition, but its design is a little more challenging to navigate.



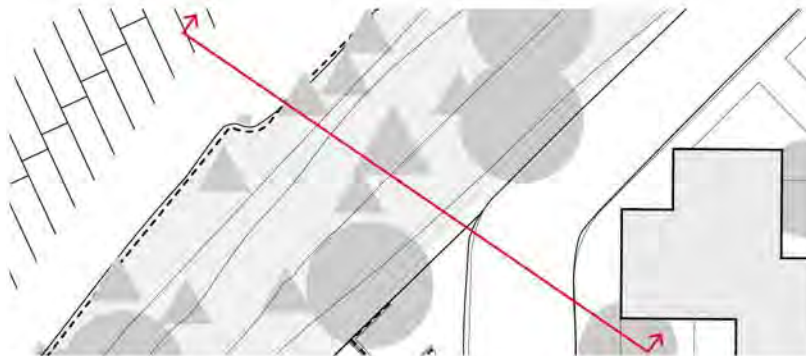
A segment of the north staircares



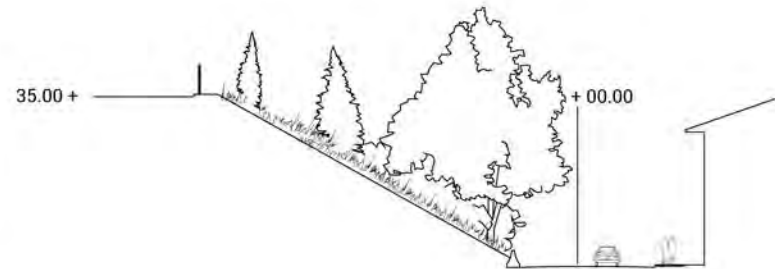
North Staircase



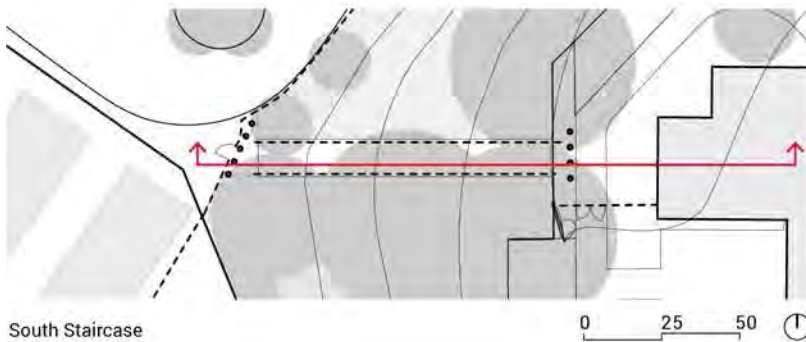
North Staircase



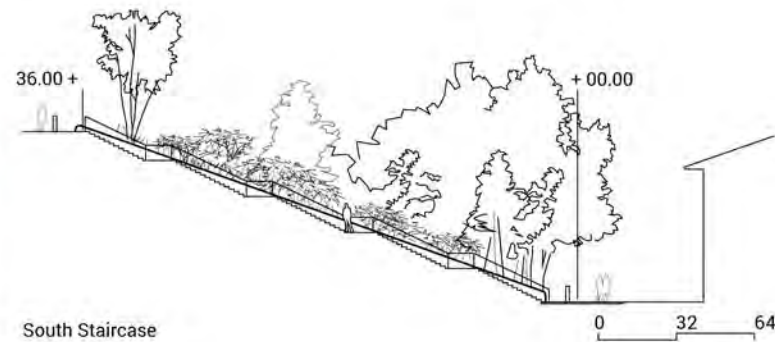
Bluff Slope



Bluff Slope



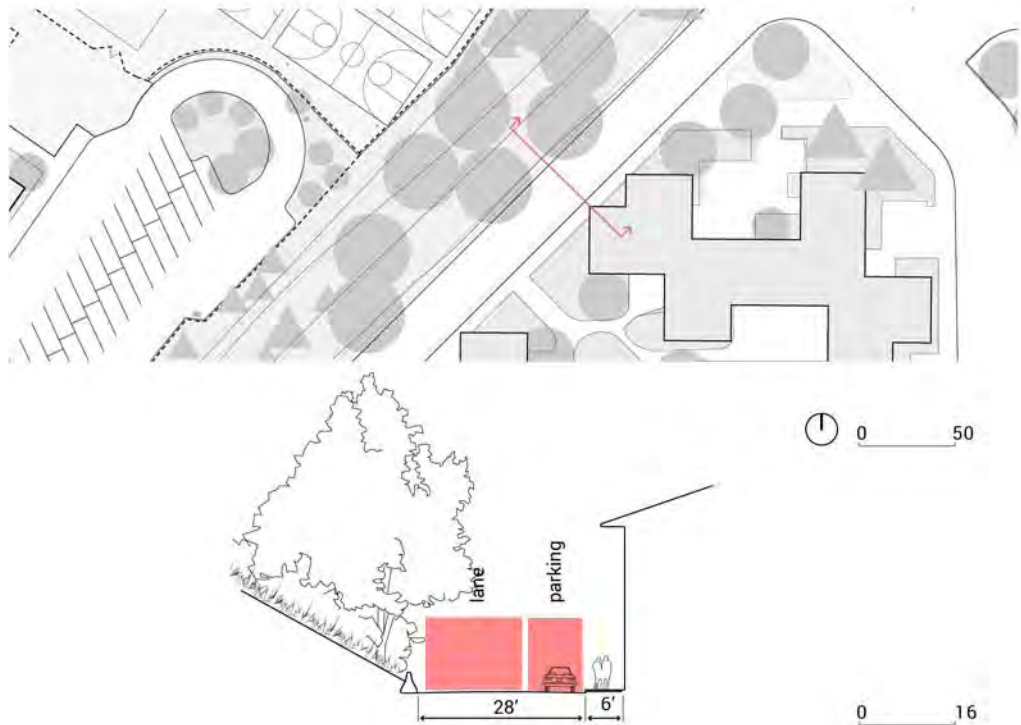
South Staircase

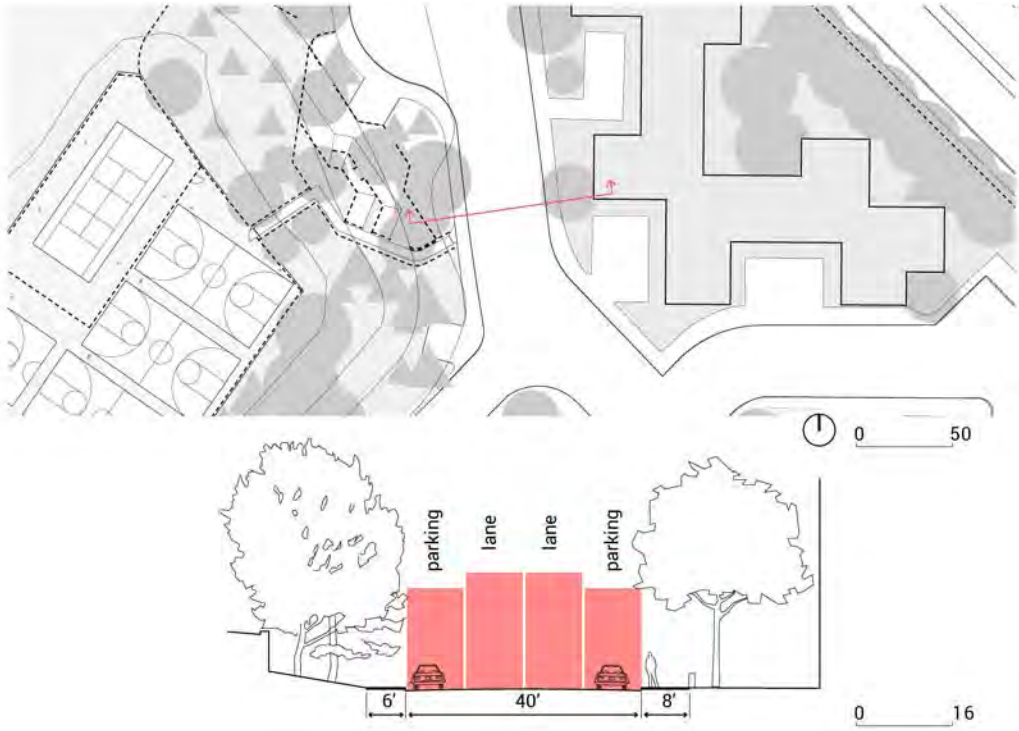


South Staircase

Wayfinding

Pedestrian connections through Mystic Neighborhood can be confusing.

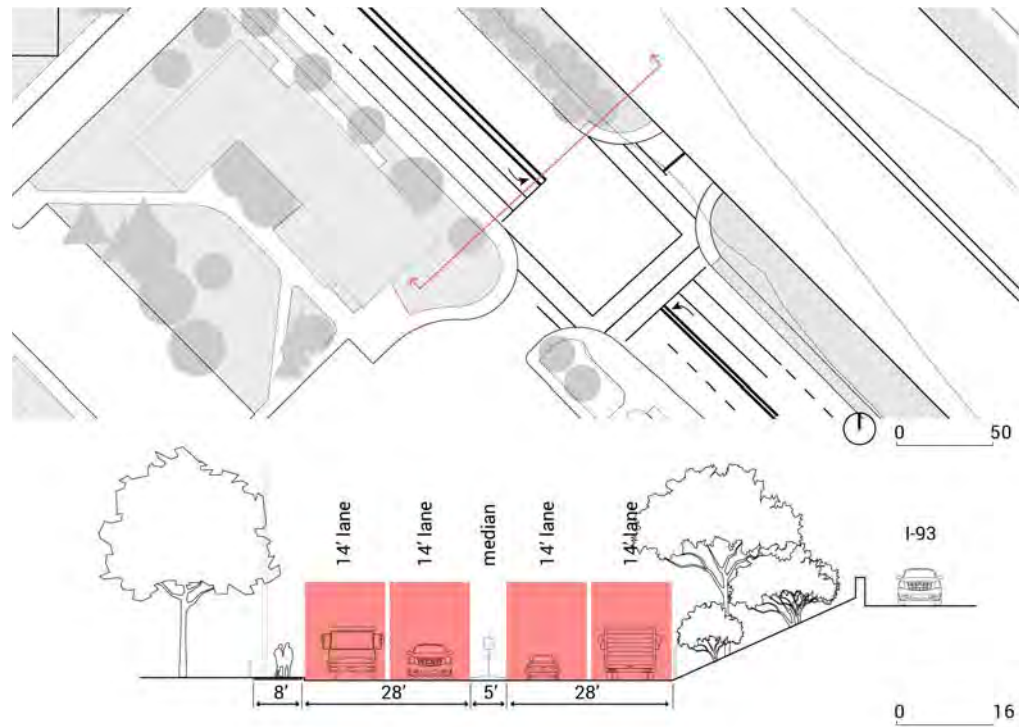




Mystic Avenue Crossing

The pedestrian experience crossing Mystic Ave is frightful. The heavy flow of multi-lane traffic is steady throughout the day. The landing space for pedestrians is shallow on the sidewalk and feels unsafe waiting for the walk signal. The walk signal feels short and the crosswalk does not cross on all sides.









The pedestrian crossing at
the corner of Shore Drive
and Mystic Avenue

Mystic River Connections

The Mystic River is just ¼ mile from the Healey School, and less than 1,000 feet from the Mystic Neighborhood, but it is both a challenge to find and to get to. The park is a neglected and under used segment of a 10 mile, 329-acre



Volunteers tend perennial gardens in the park

linear park system along the Mystic River Reservation. It is public land that is closest to low-income and environmental justice neighborhoods, but it is cut off by overpasses, highways and difficult

street crossings. And once there, many visitors are unsure of what exactly the Boathouse is, and what to do there. Blessing of the Bay Boathouse and its neighboring parks are a case study in positive vs. negative design, and our purpose is to elevate this park to the standard set by neighboring Baxter, MacDonald and the other riverfront parks in the watershed.

Safety and Sense of Place

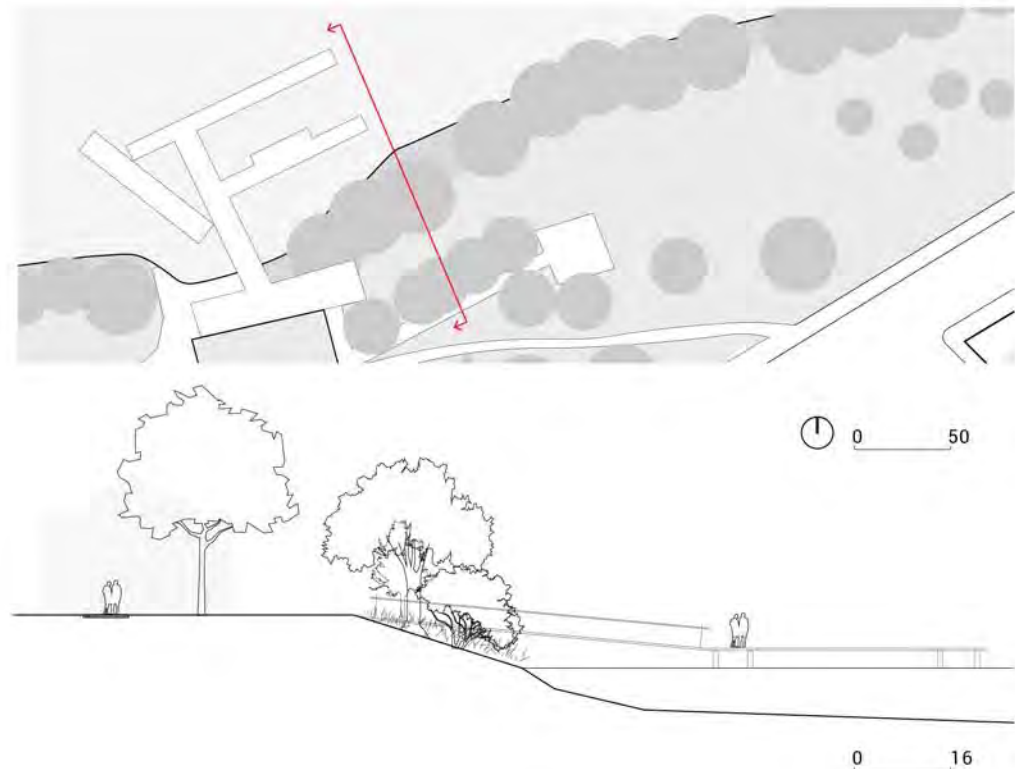
Neighbors and occasional visitors to the Blessing of the Bay Boathouse Park identified the Park's shape and layout as a key deterrent to its use. Specifically, the eastern portion of the park – the larger lawn and trail between the Boathouse building and Rt. 28 – is unbound and opens directly onto Shore Drive, giving a sense that the park is more an extension of the street, rather than a separate space for recreation. The lack of a border also had parents of smaller children concerned with their safety proximal to Shore Drive. In addition, most individuals providing feedback felt that the Boathouse itself was not a welcoming structure, lacking any signage or messaging that denotes it as a public building offering public resources – or even that it is a boathouse at all – except for those who already know about it, or are involved with one of the programs operating out of it (like Gentle Giant Rowing Club or the high school teams).

Connection to the Mystic River and Shoreline

In contrast to the several surrounding parks, and many other river parks in the region, Blessing of the Bay does not provide a user experience that connects one to the river itself. In one sense, the park is oriented backwards, with an open view of the street (as described in Obstacle 1) and a green wall of trees and invasive species along the shore, obscuring almost all views of the water. The boathouse

building and boat ramp are the only existing spaces to actually approach the water's edge, but as described previously the building does not present a welcoming façade, and the boat ramp gives the impression of being for private use as it is adjacent to locked gates, with a floating dock that is pulled away from public access when the boathouse is closed (though one imagines for reasons of safety and

liability). A distinguishing advantage of a riverfront park is the ability for visitors to connect to the water itself, either through views, or through recreational or educational means on the water. In particular, teachers at the Healey School noted with regret the inability to actually make contact with the water for educational purposes, inspiring discussion of a “living classroom” or “eco-lab” at the Boathouse Park.



What Do I Do When I Get There?

The one thing that the community sessions brought to the forefront most often was the realization that most people did not have a strong feeling that there was any reason to go to the Blessing of the Bay Boathouse, as it lacked resources and amenities. In look and feel, the Blessing of the Bay Boathouse Park is similar to MacDonald Park—a natural, untouched environment—but lacks MacDonald Park’s scope, size and depth. In MacDonald Park, one can get lost



in the feeling of being outside of an urban space, separated from the roads and buildings. Blessing of the Bay is a narrower, more linear space, akin to Baxter Park at Assembly Row, but lacks the amenities and attractions of that section of the river, including food, stores, and a playground.



CHAPTER 3 **PLANNING PROCESS**

Community Outreach

The project team led an extensive community outreach process with emphasis on strengthening connections between the various communities and places. The project team met with stakeholders and held a series of public community workshops (in December 2015, January 2016,



At the December 2015 workshop, community members had a chance to share ideas, watch the documentary, "The Staircase" and participate in a series of challenges related to the site.



December 2015, students time their evening walk to the Mystic River and map their route. Some were visiting the River for the first time.

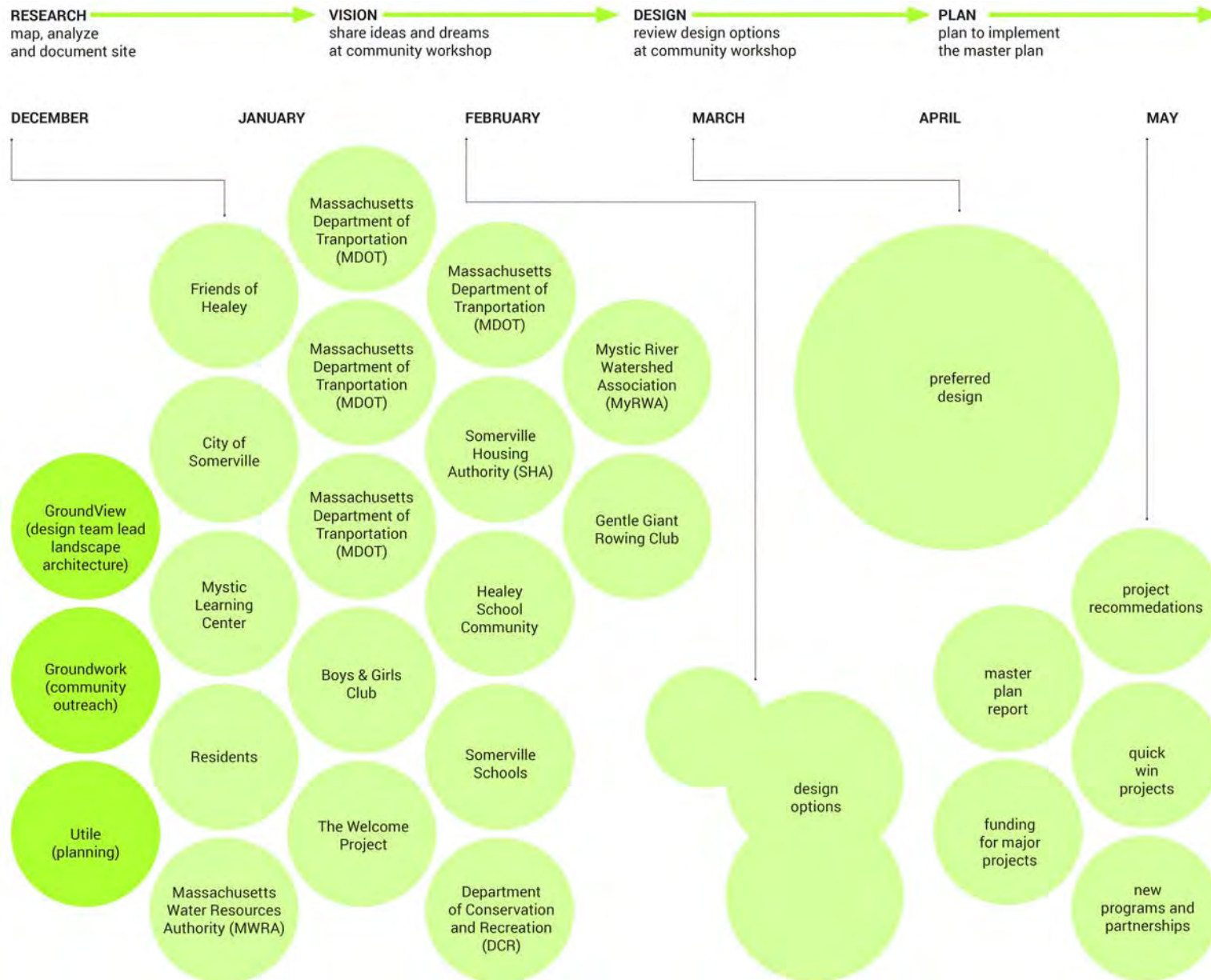
and March 2016) both at the Healey School and Mystic Learning Center. The project team also spread information through posted information and connected with stakeholders at various school and community events, including the Friends of Healey Art Festival and the Mayor's Spring Cleanup.

The project team provided periodic updates to property owners, representatives, and tenants within the study area, including:

the Healey School administration, 6th and 7th grade Healey School Classes, the City of Somerville's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, the City of Somerville's CPA administrator, the Somerville Housing Authority, the Boys & Girl's Clubs of Middlesex County, the Mystic River Watershed Association, and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. We also went door to door in the Mystic Neighborhood to interview residents.

The project team also reached out to the community through email updates, the school website, the Friends of Healey Facebook page, and through a dedicated project website: HealeyMystic.org. Electronic stakeholder feed included an editable open-source project map, an online survey and guest blogging opportunities on the project website.

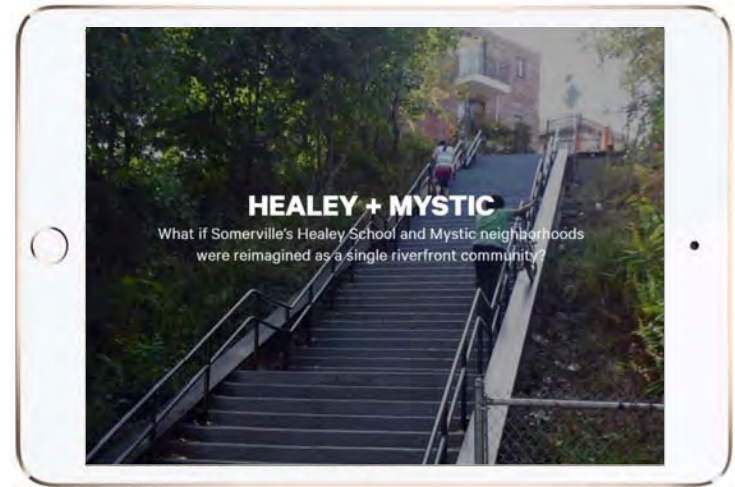
OPPOSITE: A diagram illustrates the community process, beginning in December 2015.



Community Participation



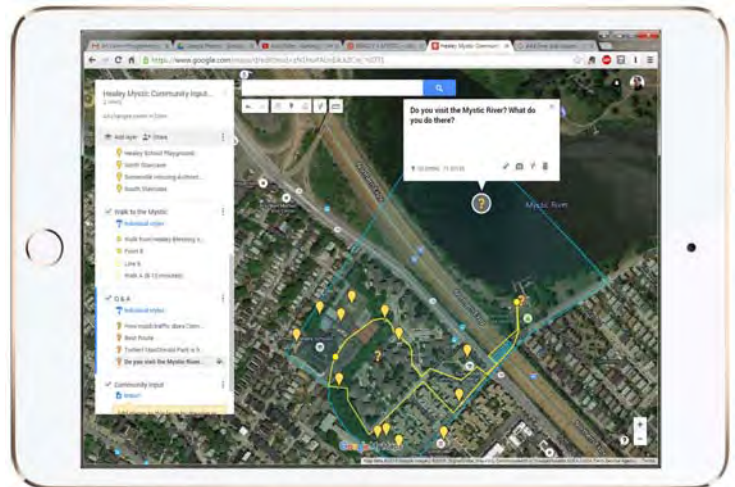
Students sketch ideas at the January 2016 Community Workshop.



A website, healeymystic.org, was created to describe the plan as it evolved and host contributing blog posts.

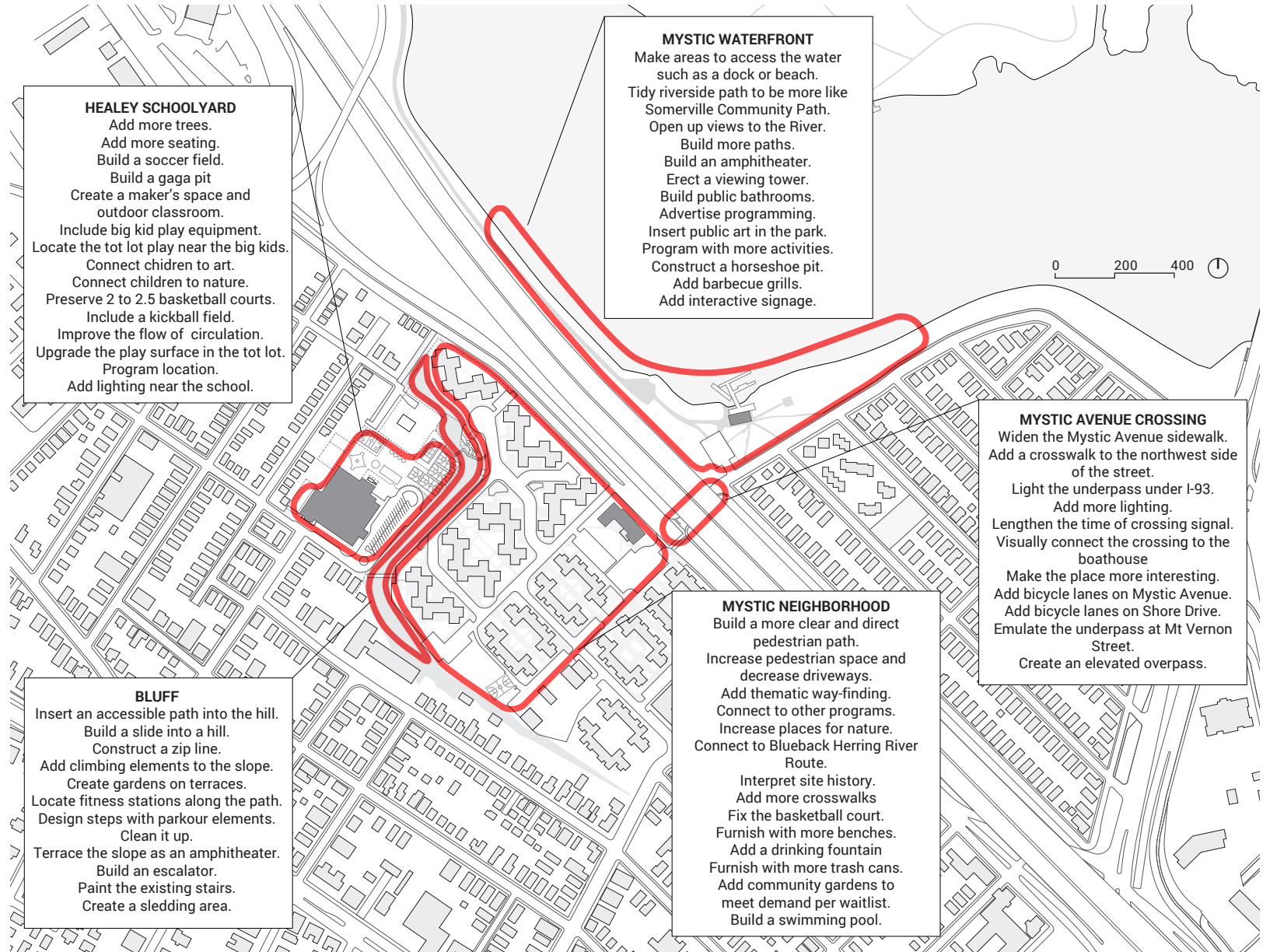


Design team listening to a student at the January 2016 Community Workshop.



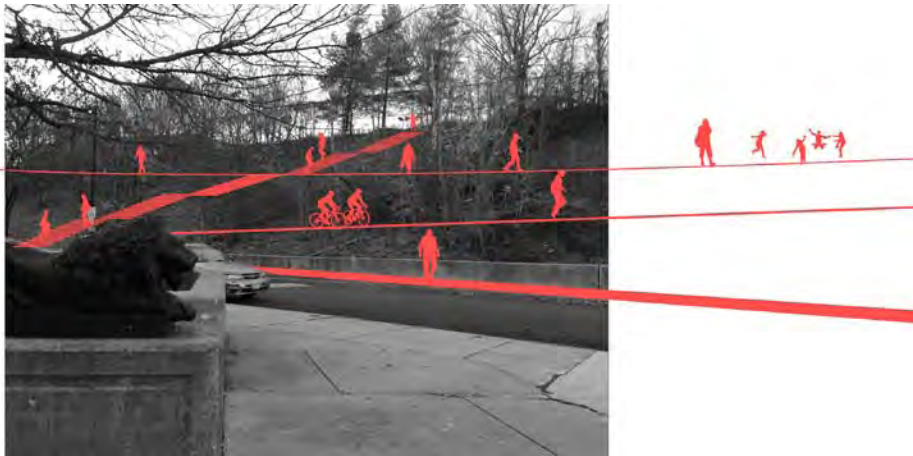
An open interactive online map was created to track community input in space.

Community Workshop Inventory



Organizing Ideas

Out of the weeks of planning and community input emerged a variety of aspirations and ideas, from the highly particular to the truly global. The design team began to interpret their common themes visually and develop design goals for different areas of the site.



Rebuild the bluff as an accessible, desirable, and public place. When people can inhabit the bluff, above, its perception as a barrier is replaced with a sense of welcome and vitality.



Enhance the character and functionality of the schoolyard by increasing the variety of programs and adding vegetation. Above, a vegetated promontory softens the fenced barrier and allows views to the River.



Improve the clarity, safety and universality of access along major neighborhood pedestrian routes. Above, a pedestrian plaza at the Healey School's main entrance.



Reimagine the shoreline of the Mystic River around Blessing of the Bay Boathouse as a nexus of environmental immersion and interpretation. A floating walkway, above, allows access and immersion to the River Basin.

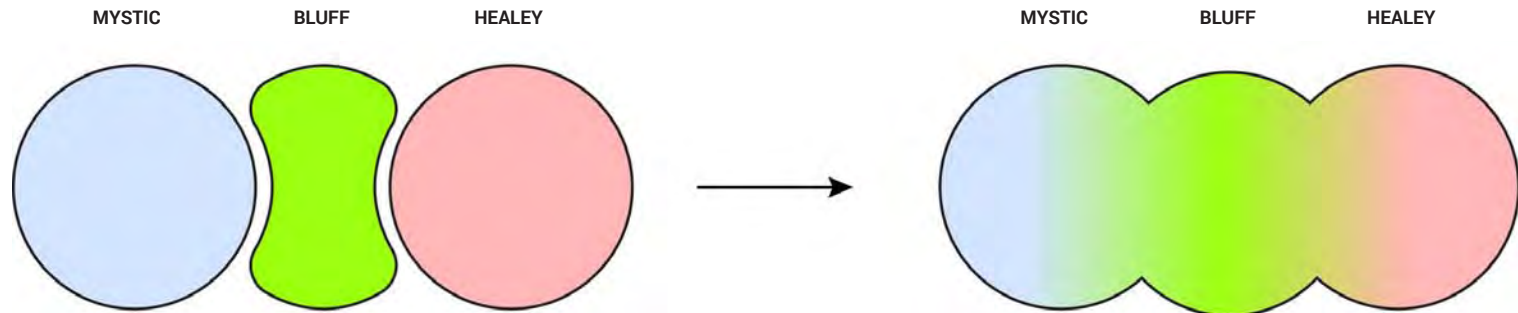
Design Scenarios

On Wednesday March 30th, the design team presented two design scenarios for a future Healey+Mystic Neighborhood. Both scenarios identify a variety of program opportunities, improve pedestrian connections within the project study area, and connect to regional networks & amenities.

A dominant feature of the study area is the nearly three-acre, three-story high bluff that physically separates the Mystic Neighborhood from the Healey School. Since the 1950s, when the natural hillside was steepened to accommodate housing, residents have sought ways to transcend this barrier. In the 1980s, the Mystic community was successful in advocating for the construction of two stairways that are now in various states of disrepair. This bluff is the nexus of the two design proposals, INCREMENTAL and TRANSFORMATIVE. A summary of each is described as follows.

BLUR THE BLUFF

Redesign the bluff as a zone of linkage and amenity that is equally useful to both communities.



SPLIT THE DIFFERENCE

Make the bluff useable by terracing it, and placing amenities at intermediate levels.



Incremental

INCREMENTAL conceives the bluff as a zone of linkage and amenity that is useful to both communities. By bringing vegetation into the schoolyard and increasing options for pedestrian circulation, the bluff becomes more connective, less foreboding, and more fun. A slide and ramble serve as adventurous ways to traverse the slope together with a network of discovery paths. A fully accessible path connects

directly with River Road and is identified as a primary pedestrian route, connecting to the Mystic Activity Center and Mystic River. A sunken outdoor classroom, situated near the river's edge, can flex as a place for seasonal programming while capturing rainwater. The schoolyard additions include a small field and tree canopy while retaining space for hardcourt sports and improving the existing tot lot surfacing.





Transformative

TRANSFORMATIVE opens the bluff by terracing it and placing major shared amenities at intermediate levels. Redistributing the grade allows the wall-like barrier of the bluff to shrink substantially. Sloped walks and stairs lead to an inviting green space between the school and the neighborhood. This new space, gained by regrading the bluff and reorganizing the Healey School parking lot, allows for a large field that can be used for a variety athletic programs, particularly soccer. On the second slope, we propose an amphitheater to serve a variety of School curricular and extra-curricular functions as well as community gatherings. A proposed pedestrian street, in line with Memorial Road,

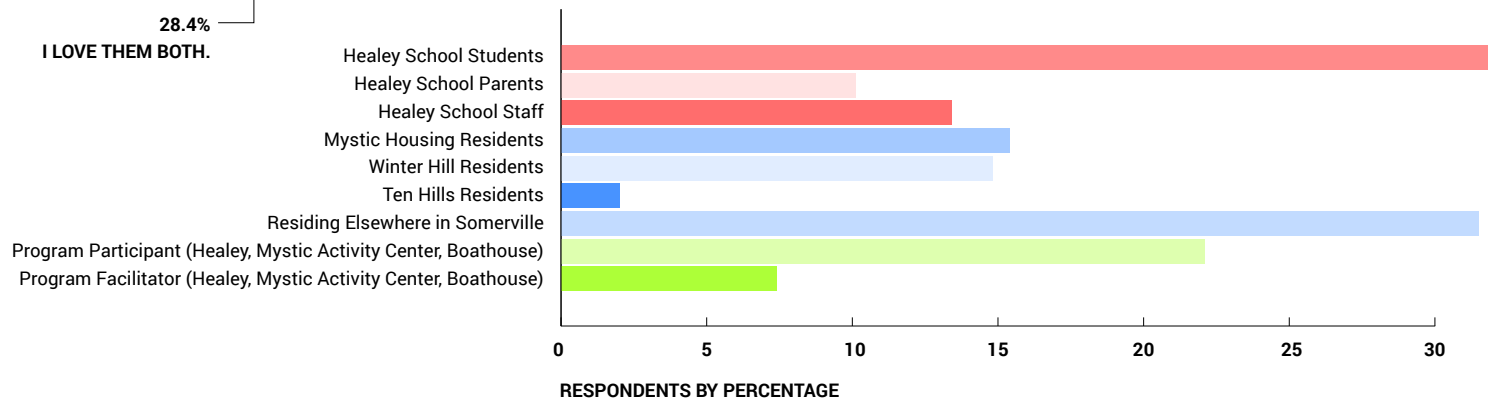
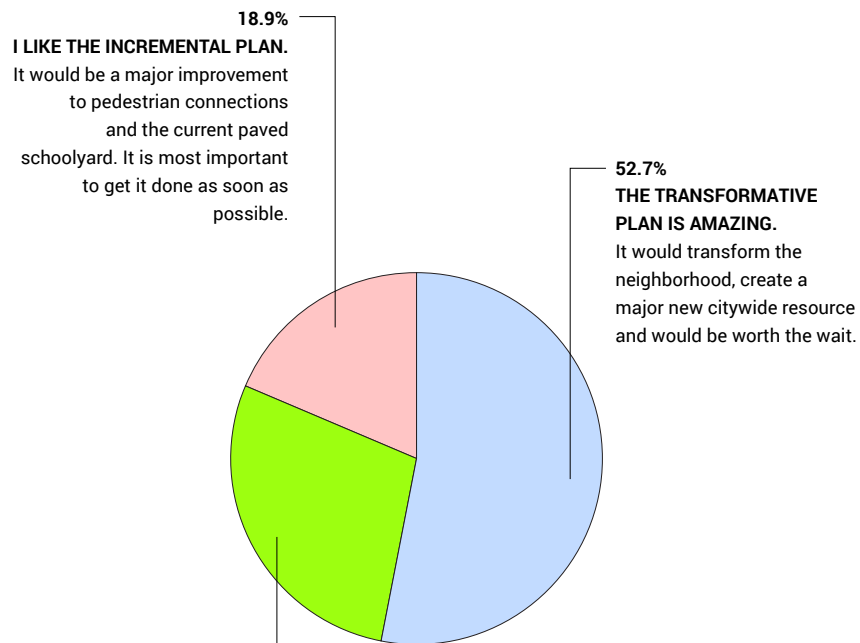
serves as a new 'front entry' to the Mystic Neighborhood from the west. Swapping the Healey community garden location with the tot lot gives plants more sun and keeps younger kids in eyesight of older siblings that may be playing basketball or climbing on new play equipment included for older kids. In the Mystic Neighborhood park, the community gardens and lawn field are swapped to take advantage of the sun and the stone cliff face. Improvements at the river include a floating dock that leads to a series of aquatic living labs and an immersive experience of the Mystic River.





Community Response

Feedback was gathered through public community workshops both at the Healey School and Mystic Learning Center, presentations at standing community meetings, online and paper surveys, and door-to-door interviewing. The project team captured input from hundreds of stakeholders across a wide geographic and demographic cross-section.





A poster board and comment box was posted at various locations and events. Above, community members review the plans at the annual Somerville Spring Clean-up in April 2016.



March 2016, conceptual plan options are presented for feedback at a second Community Workshop.



CHAPTER 4 **THE MASTER PLAN**

Large Projects, Design

1

Healey School Entrance and Parking Lot

Redesign the parking lot to create a generous and inviting pedestrian plaza. Prioritize pedestrian access to the school while maintaining a similar number of parking spaces. Improve the pedestrian/vehicle conflict at the east end of Meacham Street.

2

Field and Amphitheater

Rebuild the Bluff to create amenities at a mid-level between the Healey and Mystic Neighborhoods – including a rectangular field sized and competitive soccer matches up to the U10 age group (size ‘S’ as defined by the City of Somerville Field’s report) and a variety of non-competitive uses. Build a new 600-person amphitheater into the hillside. Connect the new field, amphitheater, and schoolyard with an accessible path and central stair that improves physical and visual access.

3

North Healey Schoolyard

Reorganize the hardcourts to include basketball, kickball and gaga ball. Add trees and shaded seating areas. Include play elements for older children. Improve the tot-lot playground with solid safety surfacing. Provide pedestrian connection to Healey Schoolyard from Mt. Vernon Avenue.

4

Healey School Garden Extension

Acquire two vacant lots, adjacent to the existing school garden. Extend the garden and include opportunities for natural play.

5

Pedestrian Way

Extend Memorial Road northeast to Connors Drive as a new linear pedestrian street. The street provides a car-free, central gathering area for the Mystic community and establishes a clear and direct pedestrian route through the Mystic Neighborhood, between the Healey School and the River.

6

Mystic Crossing

Improve the pedestrian experience at Mystic Avenue's Shore Drive crossing. Improvements may include: widening the sidewalk pavement at the intersection, adding a crosswalk at the northwest crossing, increasing signal length, adding bike lanes along both streets, and improving lighting, particularly underneath the elevated portions of I-93.

7

Living Lab and Floating Walkway

Create a long floating walkway that allows non-boating visitors to immerse themselves in the river basin. Engage partners in public and private partners and the education community to design and build a floating classroom and living laboratory on the Mystic River.

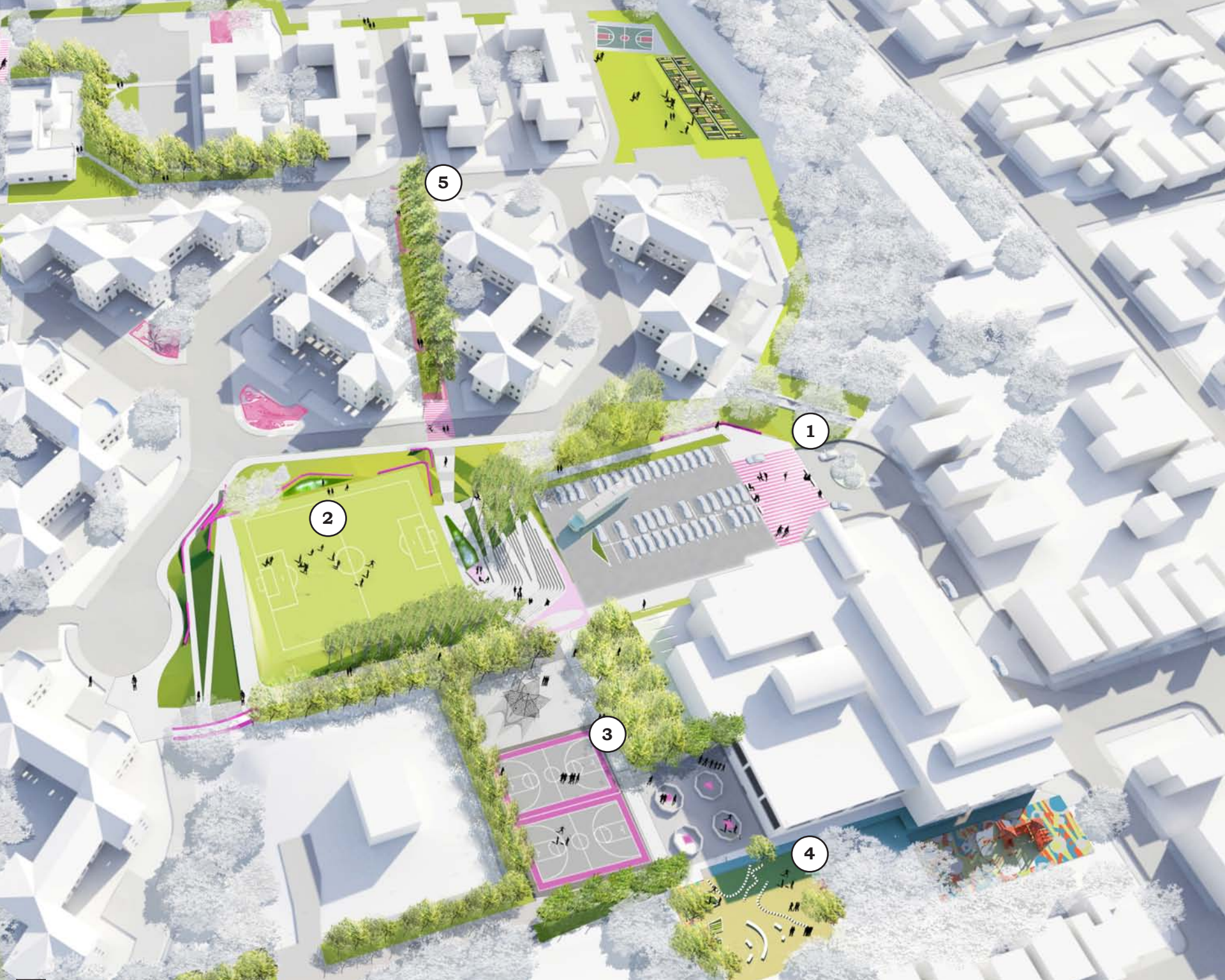
8

Blessing of the Bay Boathouse Park

Renovate the Park to welcome people to enjoy activities along the river's edge and/or safely connect to the larger Mystic River Reservation Bike Trail. Site improvements could include: improved pedestrian walkway along Shore Drive, bike/pedestrian trail along the river's edge and opportunities for interactive programming. Establishment a friends group can help support annual programming and marketing of events.

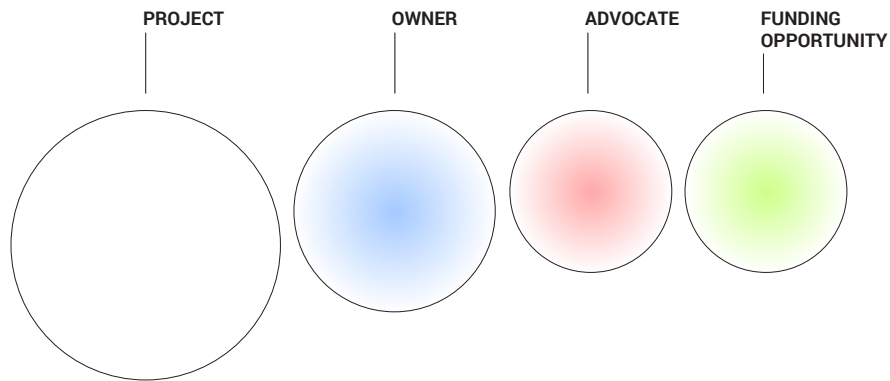
Large projects, described on previous page.





Large Projects, Management

The Master Plan spans a study area owned by six different entities. Of the eight components of the plan, several proposed projects straddle property lines or jurisdiction. As yet, the critical path towards implementation is not always clear. The following organizational chart identifies some of the collaborators and indicates opportunities for leadership.





Small Projects

Recognizing that large, multi-stakeholder projects can take time to organize and implement, the following are two lists of smaller projects contributing to the holistic plan, that may be a quick win project implemented through efforts of individual entities, including volunteer groups. Other projects warranting a more coordinated effort may require funding through grant programs for professional services and project materials.

Quick Win Projects

- A** **Gaga Ball Court at Healey School**
Install Gaga Ball Court (upper left, opposite page) in north corner of schoolyard.
- B** **Soccer Court at Healey School**
Convert current tennis court (lower left, opposite page) into soccer. Remove light and tennis posts. Paint court for soccer and provide goals.
- C** **Tot-Lot at Healey School**
Take down fence between shaded area by street and tot-lot and extend the lower fence to the gate door. Move the buddy bench into new shaded area (upper right, opposite page).
- D** **South Stair Entrance**
Remove fence and gate from top of stairs.
- E** **Drinking Fountain and Bench at Mystic Court**
Install a drinking fountain and bench at basketball court (bottom right, opposite page).
- F** **Blessing of the Bay Boathouse Sign**
Provide a sign on the Boathouse that provides information on activities and hours.



A gaga ball court



The chainlink fence separating a wooded area from the Healey School tot-lot



The tennis court recommended for conversion to soccer



Mystic basketball court

Coordinated Projects

G

South Stair Art

Plan for mural on the risers (upper right, opposite page) of the south stairs.

H

Interim Improvements at Healey School

Plan and implement an improved north schoolyard with new pavement graphics and the addition of trees and seating (upper left, opposite page). Improvements would not preclude future improvements.

I

Paint Mystic Crossing

Improve visibility of pedestrian crossing with bold crosswalk graphics (bottom left, opposite page).

J

Mystic River Invasive Species Removal

Remove invasive species to improve shoreline ecology and open up river views (bottom right, opposite page).

K

Friends of the Blessing of the Bay Boathouse Park

Establish a friends group that can coordinate on-going support for project implementation, annual programming and event marketing.



Plant trees in North Healey Schoolyard and install benches.



Organize a staircase art installation.

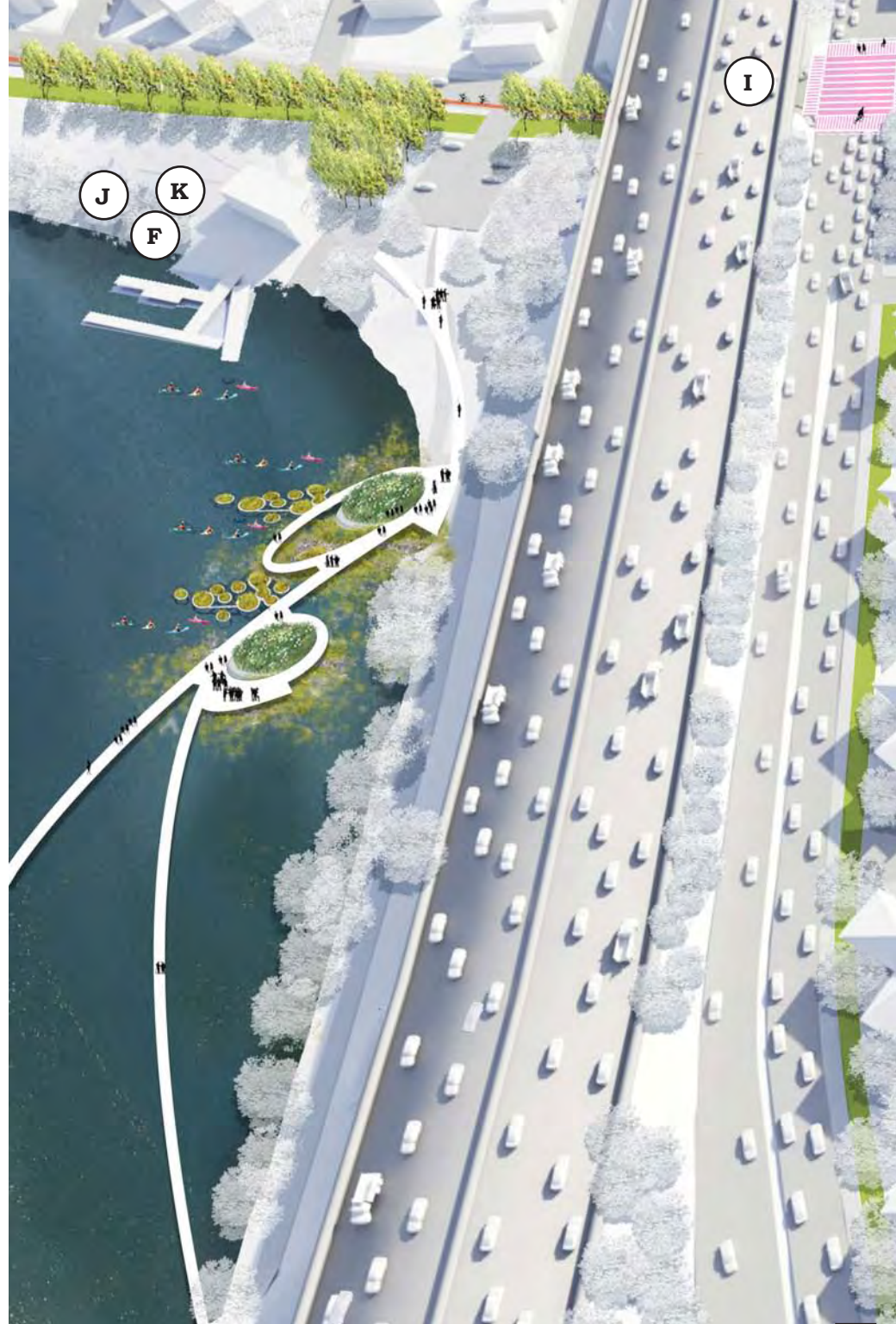


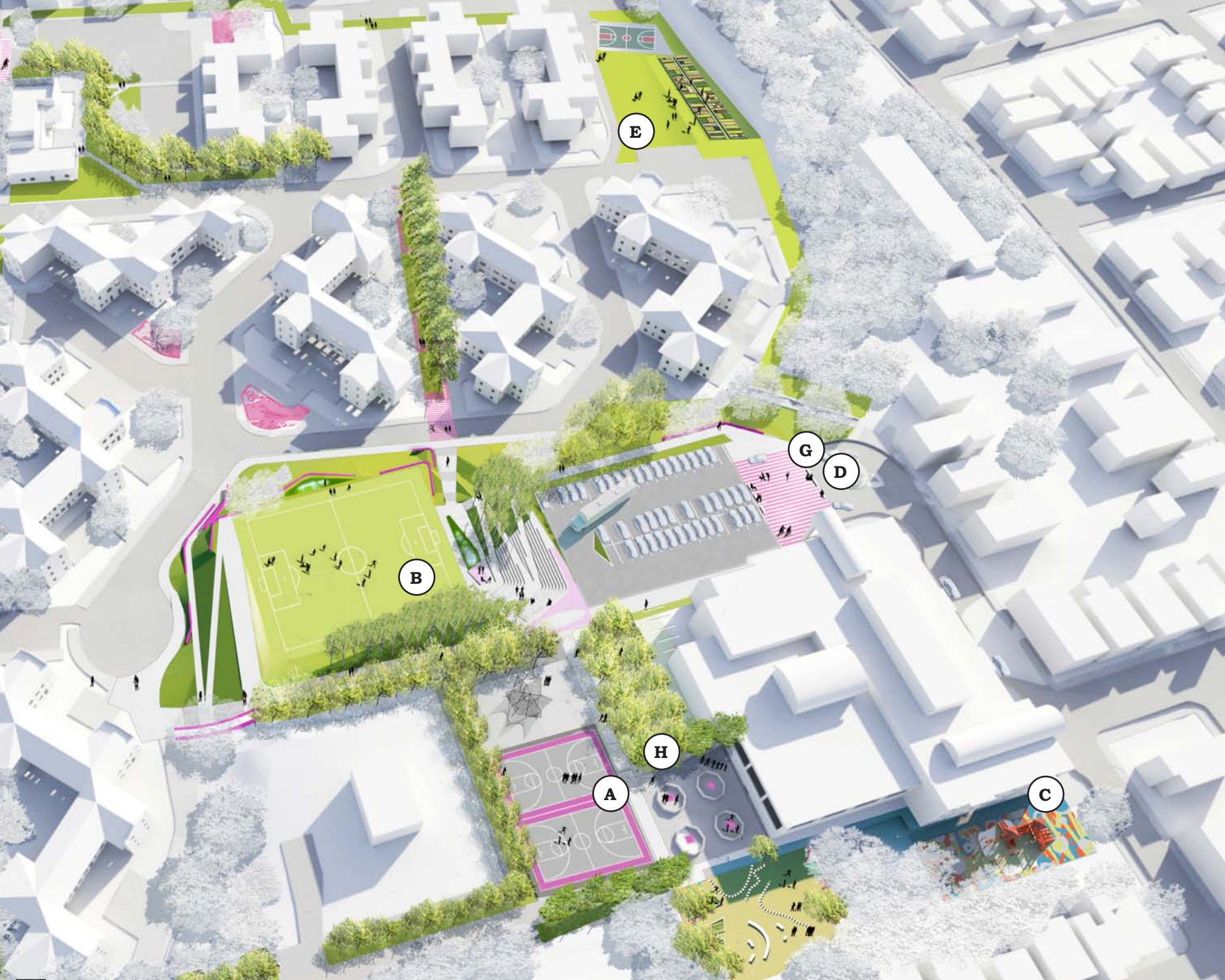
Paint the Mystic Ave crossing with bold graphics.



Remove invasive species at the river's edge to improve shoreline ecology and open up views.

Small projects, described on previous page.





E

B

G

D

H

A

C

CHAPTER 5 **IMPLEMENTATION**

Steps Forward

Fall 2016

- Meet with Key Partners to establish roles, goals and schedule for Large and Small Projects.
- Friends of Healey to meet with Mystic Tenant Association and Mystic Learning Center to review Master Plan.
- Friends of Healey to coordinate with Somerville Public Schools and City to implement Small (Quick Win) Projects: (A) Gaga Ball Court at Healey School, (B) Soccer Court at Healey School, (C) Tot-Lot at Healey School, (D) South Stair Entrance.
- Coordinate with Somerville Housing Authority to install Small (Quick Win) Project: (E) Drinking Fountain and Bench at Mystic Court.
- Groundwork Somerville to coordinate the installation of Small (Quick Win) Project: (F) Blessing of the Bay Boathouse Sign.
- Friends of Healey to coordinate and plan to submit for LCC grant through SAC to implement Small (Coordinated) Project: (G) South Stair Art.
- Friends of Healey to coordinate with City to conduct feasibility study of the Bluff for implementation of Large Project: (2) Field and Amphitheater. This would include a geotechnical report and site survey.
- Friends of Healey to coordinate with City to submit CPA Eligibility Determination Forms & Applications:
 - Acquisition of the two vacant lots adjacent to the existing Healey School garden (Large Project 4)
 - Design services for Large Projects: (1) Healey School Entrance and Parking Lot, (2) Amphitheater (Field not included the City will need to locate separate funds to field design), (3) North Healey Schoolyard, and (4) Healey School Garden Extension.
 - Groundwork Somerville to coordinate with MyRWA to submit CPA Eligibility Determination Forms & Applications for Small Project: (J) Mystic River Invasive Species Removal and Large Project: (8) Blessing of the Bay Boathouse Park.

Spring 2017

- Meet with Key Partners to plan next steps.
- Friends of Healey to meet with City to review and coordinate Healey School improvements:
 - Feasibility Report findings
 - CPA grant awards
 - Large Projects: (1) Healey School Entrance and Parking Lot, (2) Amphitheater (Field not included - the City will need to locate separate funds to field design), (3) North Healey Schoolyard, and (4) Healey School Garden Extension.
 - Small (Coordinated) Projects: (H) Interim Improvements at Healey School
- Friends of Healey to meet with Somerville Public Schools and City to review project progress:
 - Small (Quick Win) Projects: (A) Gaga Ball Court at Healey School, (B) Soccer Court at Healey School, (C) Tot-Lot at Healey School, (D) South Stair Entrance
- Friends of Healey to review feasibility of Small (Coordinated) Project: (G) South Stair Art:
 - LCC grant awards (through SAC)
- Coordinate with Somerville Housing Authority, Mystic Tenants Association and Mystic Learning Center to discuss Mystic Neighborhood improvements:
 - Small (Quick Win) Project: (E) Drinking Fountain and Bench at Mystic Court
 - Large Projects: (5) Pedestrian Way
- Coordinate with MassDOT, City, Mystic Tenants Association and Mystic Learning Center to discuss Mystic Crossing improvements:
 - Small (Coordinated) Project: (I) Paint Mystic Crossing
 - Large Project: (6) Mystic Crossing
- Groundwork Somerville to meet with MyRWA to review and coordinate Mystic River improvements:
 - CPA grant awards
 - Small (Quick Win) Project: (F) Blessing of the Bay Boathouse Sign
 - Small (Coordinated) Project: (K) Friends of the Blessing of the Bay Boathouse Park and (J) Mystic River Invasive Species Removal
 - Blessing of the Bay Boathouse Park

Key Partners – Public

The Healey+Mystic Master Plan identified a broad range of large and small projects that require significant collaboration with multiple public and private partners.

Somerville Housing Authority

Many of the plan's bolder initiatives will provide a direct benefit to the residents of the Mystic Housing Development, which is owned and managed by the Somerville Housing Authority (SHA). Increased connectivity between the school, housing, and the waterfront will dramatically improve the lives of the residents as well as the broader neighborhood.

SHA participated in the Master Planning process by participating the community workshops and site walks. The

feasibility of these initiatives relies upon the willingness of the authority's Executive Director and its board to embrace the proposed improvements at the Mystic Housing Development. Their support is vitally important to advancing the project beyond the Master Plan phase.

Paul Mackey
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paulm@sha-web.org

Jose Filho
Mystic Activity Center Facilities
josef@sha-web.org

Shannon Bennett
Resident Outreach
shannonb@sha-web.org

Somerville Public Schools

An important component of the Master Plan is improving the diversity of play opportunities in the schoolyard. The Healey School principal and staff participated in the planning process by participating the community workshops and site walks.

The Somerville Public Schools' support for converting a portion of the schoolyard into a public park is important. Early on in the implementation phase it will be important to determine if any competing uses are being considered such as parking or school expansion.

Jill Geiser
Arthur D. Healey School Principal
jgeiser@k12.somerville.ma.us

David Gordon
Finance Director
dgordon@k12.somerville.ma.us

Mary Skipper
Superintendent
mskipper@k12.somerville.ma.us

City of Somerville

City planning staff has been fully engaged in the development of the recommended projects. Their input on project selection and how they can be coordinated with other city initiatives in the area has been helpful to the planning process. The City's involvement is imperative and will build support with other public partners.

OSPCD

Arn Franzen
Director of Parks and Open Space
afranzen@somervillema.gov

Melissa Woods
Planner
mwoods@somervillema.gov

Brad Rawson
Director of Transportation and Infrastructure
brawson@somervillema.gov

Somerville Recreation
Jill Lathan
jlathan@somervillema.gov

Shape Up Somerville
Erica Satin-Hernandez
Coordinator
eshernandez@somervillema.gov

Massachusetts Department of Transportation

MassDOT will be an important partner for the Mystic Crossing project. Their involvement begins when the city advances a Project Need Form and a Project Initiation Form. These forms are required to start the process of getting the project on the region's Transport Improvement Plan. Alternatively the city could advance a Safe Routes to School planning process which may identify the Mystic Crossing project as an important component of the scope of work.

Frank Suszynski
District 4 Project Development Engineer
Frank.Suszynski@state.ma.us

Department of Conservation and Recreation

DCR owns the Mystic River Reservation, which includes the Blessing of the Bay Boathouse as well as the surrounding land. Increasing access to the Mystic basin has been a DCR priority since they published their Master Plan for the reservation in 2009. The Healey+Mystic Master Plan calls for increasing the suite of activities near the boathouse by installing a floating walkway and a living lab with a floating classroom. Gaining DCR support for these improvements will require the development of a convincing operations and management plan.

Dan Driscoll
Director, Recreation Facilities Planning
Dan.Driscoll@state.ma.us

Municipal Water Resources Authority

Michele Gillen
Director of Real Property & Environmental Management
Michele.Gillen@MWRA.state.ma.us

Key Partners – Private

Friends of the Healey (FOH)

Leadership from the Friends is important to advancing the Master Plan. As an all-volunteer group the Friends should partner with existing organizations to increase their capacity. An important role of the Friends will include organizing parents at the Healey School who are in support of the plan's implementation.

Greg Nadeau
Grant Coordinator
gregnadeau7@gmail.com

Groundwork Somerville (GWS)

GWS plays an important role in managing the existing urban wild in the schoolyard. With boots already on the ground, they are a logical partner to provide enrichment activities for the school as well as take the lead on managing the extension of the Healey School Garden.

Chris Mancini
Executive Director
chris@groundworksomerville.org

Boys and Girls Club

Rob Fujiwara
Healey Club Director
rfujiwara@kidsclubs.org

Lindsay Smythe
Executive Director
lsmythe@kidsclubs.org

Mystic Learning Center (MLC) and Welcome Project

Two partner non-profits based at 530 Mystic Ave. across from the Blessing of the Bay Boathouse were crucial in recruiting youth and adults from the neighborhood into the community planning process. These are two important allies in any plans going forward around changes to the Mystic Neighborhood or Boathouse Park.

Fluffy Bergman
MLC Director
MLCenter@verizon.net

Mystic Tenants Association (MTA)

The Mystic Tenants Association is a HUD recognized volunteer group that acts as an advocacy group for the residents of the Mystic Housing Development. The Mystic Tenants Association also serves as an intermediary between the Somerville Housing Authority and the residents of the Mystic Housing Development.

Lunita Johnson,
MTA Secretary
(617) 625-2348
lmjo25.2504@gmail.com

Mystic River Water Association (MyRWA)

MyRWA has actively provided experience and expertise through our feedback process. Staffers Patrick Herron (recently promoted to Executive Director) and Andy Milne attended community sessions, and Greenways Coordinator Amber Christoffersen meets regularly with Groundwork and Groundview staff and is strongly invested in the improvement of the Boathouse Park. They are a logical partner to lead a CPA application for river-related work.

Amber Christoffersen
amber.christoffersen@mysticriver.org

Gentle Giant Rowing Club

Rich Whelan
rich@gentlegiantrowing.org

Funding

There are a broad range of funding sources available to municipalities and park advocates to support the acquisition, development, and renovation of parks. The list below provides an overview of the programs that could be used to implement the Healey+Mystic Master Plan.

City Grant Programs

Community Preservation Act (CPA) Grants

With the passage of the CPA, the City created a Community Preservation Fund, the resources of which will be devoted solely to affordable housing, historic preservation, open space, and outdoor recreation projects.

The eligibility form is typically due in September and the full application is due in December of the same year. If approved, funds are granted the following fiscal year (July is the beginning of the City of Somerville's fiscal year).

Contact:

Kristen Stelljes

CPA Coordinator

kstelljes@somervillema.gov

<http://www.somervillema.gov/CPA>

Local Cultural Council (LCC) Grants

The Somerville Arts Council (SAC) awards money once a year to support artists, schools, organizations in Somerville. The LCC Grant Program is funded and overseen by the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Somerville LCC program grants are reviewed by SAC board members and local peers with expertise in the appropriate disciplines. Each year new panelists are convened to review new submissions. Applications are typically due in the fall.

Contact:

Rachel Strutt

Somerville Arts Council

50 Evergreen Avenue

Somerville, MA 02145

T 617.625.6600 ext. 2985

rstruttl@somervillema.gov

<http://www.somervilleartscouncil.org/grants>

Community Development Block Grant

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is a flexible program that provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community development needs. Beginning in 1974, the CDBG program is one of the longest continuously run programs at HUD. The CDBG program provides annual grants on a formula basis to 1209 general units of local government and States.

The CDBG entitlement program allocates annual grants to larger cities and urban counties to develop viable communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and opportunities to expand economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons. CDBG grants are awarded through the local municipality.

Contact:

Kesh Gedeon

Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development

93 Highland Avenue

Somerville, MA 02143

kgedeon@somervillema.gov

Somerville Public Schools Volunteer Programs

The Somerville Public Schools coordinates a variety of volunteer programs including Boston Cares and City Year.

Contact:

Jen Capuano

Volunteer Coordinator

JCapuano@k12.somerville.ma.us

State Grant Programs

The majority of the programs offered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are operated by the Division of Conservation Services, which is part of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. Most of the programs do not permit non-profit organizations to apply for grant funds, however the most successful applicants have a broad base of support that includes groups like the Friends of the Healey.

Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities Program (PARC)

The PARC Program (formerly the Urban Self-Help Program) was established in 1977 to assist cities and towns in acquiring and developing land for park and outdoor recreation purposes. Only projects that are to be developed for suitable outdoor recreation purposes, whether active or passive in nature, shall be considered for funding. Grants are available for the acquisition of land and the construction or renovation of park and outdoor recreation facilities. Funding for the program is provided by the state's environmental bond bill. Access by the general public is required.

PARC is a reimbursement grant program that provides up to \$400,000 to municipalities that submit successful proposals.

Reimbursement means grantees must first pay for expenditures themselves and then submit for reimbursement using the required documentation. The reimbursement rate for Somerville is 62 percent, which means in order for the city to receive the maximum grant award it would have to develop a project whose total costs exceed \$645,160. Typically municipalities use Community Development Block Grants (direct grants from the federal government to the city) to provide the local contribution.

Grant funds can be used for land acquisition, design services, and construction. Proposals are typically due in July with funding decisions announced in November or December of the same year. Upon receiving the award notification, the recipient has about 18 months to complete the project.

Special attention should be given to the requirements associated with land acquisition. The applicant should have completed negotiations to acquire the land and the sale price needs to be supported by an appraisal that meets the funder's requirements.

The PARC program will require the land on which park improvements to be publicly owned and permanently protected from conversion to non-park uses. Because much

of the land in the project area is owned by the school or the local housing authority, consideration should be given to the creation of a new parcel of land to be owned by the city as permanently protected parkland. Any transfer of land to the city for park uses would have to be reviewed and approved by multiple local, state, and federal agencies. There is a chance one of the agencies would be required to receive compensation for the property to be transferred.

PARC Program contact:

Melissa Cryan

Grant Programs Supervisor

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor

Boston, MA 02114

(617) 626-1171

www.mass.gov/eea/dcs-grants

Massachusetts Recreation Trails Program (RTP)

RTP is part of the national Recreational Trails Program, which is funded through the Federal Highway Administration. Funds are disbursed to each state to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail

uses. In Massachusetts, the RTP is administered by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), and grants are reviewed and awarded in partnership with the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Board.

The RTP provides grants for project costs ranging from \$2,000 to \$50,000 to public agencies and qualified non-profit organizations. This reimbursement grant program provides funds for a variety of trail protection, construction, and stewardship projects. A local contribution to total project costs of at least 20% is required. The local contribution can be in kind services such as donated design services, construction services, or materials. Sidewalks are not eligible for funding from RTP.

Unlike the PARC program, RTP provides for greater flexibility in terms of land ownership and protected status. Proposals for projects that will take place on land that is not owned or managed by the applying organization must include a signed statement from the appropriate landowner or manager specifically authorizing the project and ensuring that the property is open for continuing public access. If the project will take place on private land, an easement for public access with a commitment of no less than 10 years must be in place prior to the grant award. Special attention should be given to the requirements

associated with land acquisition. The applicant should have completed negotiations to acquire the land and the sale price needs to be supported by an appraisal that meets the funder's requirements.

The RTP seeks to increase the number of urban trails it funds in underserved communities.

RTP Program contact:

Amanda Lewis

Department of Conservation and Recreation

136 Damon Road

Northampton, MA 01060

(413) 586-8706 ext. 19

amanda.lewis@state.ma.us

Massachusetts Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

The state's Division of Conservation Services administers the state side Land & Water Conservation Fund program in Massachusetts. Nearly 4000 acres have been acquired and hundreds of parks renovated using the \$95.6 million that Massachusetts has received from the state side portion of the federal program since 1965.

LWCF provides up to 50% of the total project cost for the acquisition, development and renovation of park, recreation or conservation areas. Municipalities, special districts and state agencies are eligible to apply. Access by the general public is required. Funding for the program is provided by proceeds from the sale of off shore oil and gas leases. Special attention should be given to the requirements associated with land acquisition. The applicant should have completed negotiations to acquire the land and the sale price needs to be supported by an appraisal that meets the funder's requirements.

Similar to PARC, the LWCF program will require the land on which park improvements to be publicly owned and permanently protected from conversion to non-park uses. Because much of the land in the project area is owned by the school or the local housing authority consideration should be given to the creation of a new parcel of land to be owned by the city as permanently protected parkland. Any transfer of land to the city for park uses would have to be reviewed and approved by multiple local, state, and federal agencies. There is a chance one of the agencies would be required to receive compensation for the property to be transferred.

Melissa Cryan
Grant Programs Supervisor
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 626-1171
www.mass.gov/eea/dcs-grants

Massachusetts Environmental Trust (MET)

MET awards nearly \$1 million annually in grants to help improve the water resources of Massachusetts including projects such as rescuing entangled whales, restoring habitat for herring and eels, researching invasive species, improving trout fisheries, preventing pollution, increasing access to water resources, and certain education programs. MET's goals are to improve and safeguard the quality of the waterways and bays throughout the Commonwealth. The Trust makes grant awards to nonprofit organizations, municipalities, and educational institutions.

MET awarded the City of Somerville \$201,000 in 2009 to create new opportunities for community members to access and engage with the Mystic River at the Blessing of the Bay Boathouse. The funding improved the grounds and its dock, as well as to designate safe pedestrian access - the Blueback Herring River Route - from Foss Park to the Boathouse on Shore Drive.

MET Program contact:
William Hinkley, Program Coordinator
617.626.1177
william.hinkley@state.ma.us

Partnerships Matching Funds Program

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) annually accepts matching-funds applications from state park friends and advocacy groups, civic and community organizations, institutions, businesses, municipal governments, and dedicated individuals with an interest in expanding access to recreation in the Commonwealth's parks.

Through the agency's Partnership Matching Funds Program, DCR will allocate approximately \$1 million or more in matching funds to finance capital projects at parks, beaches, and other reservations—welcoming visitors of all abilities for recreation, interaction, vitality, as well as solitude. Past projects through this program include: design and construction of new playgrounds, clearing invasive plants from waterways for smooth recreational boating, trail and path enhancements to improve multi-modal accessibility, the addition of a water filling station to serve visitors and a variety of tree plantings and landscape improvements.

Over the last decade, the Partnerships Matching Funds Program has fostered a combined investment by the Commonwealth and public and private partners of more than \$10 million in the states parks.

DCR will provide a dollar-for-dollar match to successful applicants, will consider providing a two-to-one dollar match for select projects, and consider projects that may require more than one year to plan and complete.

Partnerships Matching Funds Program contact:

Lisa Barstow

Director of Community Relations

Department of Conservation and Recreation

Lisa.Barstow@state.ma.us

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/get-involved/partnerships/>

Massachusetts Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program

The Massachusetts Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program helps to reduce air pollution, and traffic congestion near schools, while increasing the health, safety, and physical activity of elementary and middle school students. The Program is managed by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

In 2005, the United States Congress passed federal legislation establishing a National Safe Routes to School program under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users Act (SAFETEA-LU). The legislation mandated that the Safe Routes to School Program be administered by State Departments of Transportation with federal funds.

Safe Routes to School is present in all 50 states and around the world including Canada, Puerto Rico, Great Britain, and Europe.

In the United States, Safe Routes programs serve approximately 25% of eligible public elementary and middle schools. In Massachusetts, the number of elementary and middle schools participating in SRTS is significantly great at over 45%.

Safe Routes to School programs operate in all 50 states and D.C. The programs benefit children in urban, rural, and suburban communities and represent varying income levels and walking and bicycling conditions. In July 2012, Congress passed a transportation bill: Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21). Beginning in October of 2012, SRTS activities were eligible to compete for funding alongside other programs, including the Transportation

Enhancements program and Recreational Trails program, as part of a program called Transportation Alternatives (TAP). The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is charged with putting the legislation into practice. The Massachusetts Safe Routes to School Program is fully-funded through state and federal dollars.

<http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/saferoutestoschool/AboutSafeRoutesToSchool.aspx>

Non-Profit Grant Programs

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

periodically posts information about grant and fundraising opportunities that are available for park and recreation agencies.

<http://www.nrpa.org/>

Private Foundations

There are several private foundations providing funding to support the establishment of public parks in the greater Boston area. Cultivating foundations for these typically requires aligning the project with the funder's program objectives.

Fields Pond Foundation

This Waltham based foundation's focus is providing financial assistance to nature and land conservation organizations that are community based and that serve to increase environmental awareness by involving local residents in conservation issues. The foundation makes grants for trail-making, land acquisition, establishment of stewardship endowments, and education programs/materials associated with a land protection project.

The foundation awards grants to both non-profit organizations and municipal government agencies through a simple proposal process. Grant awards are typically less than \$10,000, but the foundation will consider proposals up to \$25,000. Multiple-year grants are also considered by the foundation. Proposals are accepted on a rolling basis as the directors meet throughout the year.

Fields Pond Foundation

Five Turner Street

Box 540667

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info@fieldspond.org

The Lawrence & Lillian Solomon Foundation

The Solomon Foundation works with public and private partners to identify projects that will improve Greater Boston's major parks and greenways. Past park capital projects include the park between Fort Point channel and the Children's Museum.

The foundation is proactive in project development. Rather than accepting proposals, they target partnerships to have an impact on groups that have been marginalized and help attract more people to parks. Their work typically involves work with a community based partner and a state agency in which the foundation funds the design and a public entity funds and oversees construction. The Mystic+Healey Master Plan is known to the foundation because of their work with the Mystic River Watershed Association to help realize the improvements outlined in DCR's Master Plan for the Mystic River Basin.

Herb Nolan

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Wellesley, MA 02481

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The Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation

The Smith Family Foundation targets approximately \$15 million annually in grants to promote greater health, educational attainment, and economic mobility. The program area suitable for the Healey+Mystic Master Plan is the foundation's mid-sized capital grants program. This program supports "transformative capital projects with a total project cost in the \$250,000-\$3 million range from agencies that are well-led, can point to significant accomplishments, and have a mission that is clearly aligned with that of the Smith Family Foundation. The Trustees' intent in presenting this opportunity is not to provide general support for larger, multi-million dollar capital campaigns, but rather to catalyze discrete, identifiable projects that meet a specific need in keeping with the Foundation's mission. Projects that might be funded include those that enliven public spaces, such as recreational or community facilities, parks, or public art, as well as projects that improve the quality of life and well-being of individuals and families, and provide for the benefit of entire neighborhoods and communities."

Smith Family Foundation

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CHAPTER 6 **CONCLUSION**

A New Neighborhood Identity

At once, the record of a participatory design process, a technical study, and an imaginative project -- the Healey+Mystic Master Plan report is a capacious document. Touching on topics from storm water to signage, it may be a resource to planners, administrators and residents as they make decisions affecting the study area's future in the years to come. This is not a final design, but a vision to be used as a guide going forward.

Yet, ultimately, the plan has a single overriding purpose: to advance a fresh set of ideas to remedy a long-standing social and environmental inequity. For decades, residents of the Mystic Neighborhood have suffered from physical and social divisions that have isolated them from the rest of the City. A 3-acre bluff, primarily on Somerville Housing Authority land, separates the Healey Schoolyard from the Mystic Neighborhood, with as much as 35 feet of grade change. While the reality has improved substantially since the 1970s, the connection is not what it could be.

The fences and stairs that once served to mitigate the hazard of the Bluff and provide a safer route to school are outdated and deteriorating. In certain weather the stairs are dangerous and at certain peak traffic hours on many weekdays, a walk from the south stairways to the main school entrance is imperiled by intense solar glare. While the

Housing Authority does its best to maintain the stairs, their location, precipitation, and recent spalling of the concrete make the stairs a strong candidate for a Safe Routes to Schools program.

The Master Plan has captured people's attention because it would address the social justice barrier and create a safe route to school (and from the school to the river). It would add two major new recreation resources for community and citywide use: a soccer field and an amphitheater. The Plan paints a picture of how to address the Bluff creatively and transform it into an asset for both communities. The plan also highlights the indispensability of collaboration, particularly between the City of Somerville, Somerville Housing Authority and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

If implemented, any portion of the Master Plan will have positive impacts on the quality of life in the neighborhood. Collectively the transformations outlined in the plan could re-knit the physical and social fabric of this part of Somerville -- creating a new neighborhood identity, defined by health and connectivity.



